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RAILWAY

HISTORY™



FOR ALL WHO ARE INTERESTED IN RAILWAYS

IN THIS ISSUE:

TENT YEARS AT WEISMANTELS

John Barnard's railway career

ON THE LEVEL

Victoria's first level crossing

MOUNTAIN HIGH RAILWAY

John Dunlop's vision (NSW)

EXPLORER PAGE

Growing up with Trains update

Journal of the Australian Railway Historical Society



An Emu Bay Railway passenger train headed by North British-built 4-8-0 No. 11 standing at Rosebery Station in February 1950. The 'Explorer Page' provides an update on the article 'Growing up with trains' in the October issue of *ARH*.
I K WINNEY COLLECTION, ARHSNSW RAILWAY RESOURCE CENTRE, 104704



John Dunlop (centre-right) and fellow Mountain High Railway members undertake running repairs on the home-built motorised work trolley during the early years of restoring the Tumut-Batlow line in southern New South Wales. JOHN DUNLOP COLLECTION Jim Longworth's dedication to John Dunlop is presented from p18.

EDITORIAL

Tent years at Weismantels

Over the past 160 years, Australian railwaymen and their families have lived in tents beside the tracks. In the early days it was the 'navvies' building the lines who lived 'under canvas' in large camps along the lines linking major cities with the interior. In the years following World War II, the railway systems employed large numbers of 'New Australians', together with local married men, to rebuild their infrastructure after the war effort.

One such employee was the recently upgraded signalman John Barnard, who was posted to the crossing loop at Weismantels where a tent was the only available accommodation. Following his marriage the following year, his 'city-bred' wife, Hazel, joined him in a larger tent. Their daughter, Kathryn, tells their story of those years in a delightful contribution that captures everyday life in this isolated location. For Hazel, these were happy years with an active social life in a very different community. The article is illustrated with photos from the family collection that reinforce the story.

Peter Fisher provides a follow-up contribution from his 'Pier Pressure' (ARH No. 935, September 2015), with an exploration of the politics

and engineering issues behind what is believed to be the first railway level crossing in Victoria. This well-illustrated contribution includes historic and contemporary views of key sites.

John Dunlop had an interesting career as a designer and builder of small locomotives and rolling stock, primarily for amusement railways. As Jim Longworth recounts in this issue, John's dream was the establishment of a scenic tourist railway on the Tumut-Batlow section of the former branch line in southern New South Wales. Jim tells the story of that venture as a tribute to John's remarkable career.

Melanie Dennis and Gerardus Mol provide additional notes on Les Morley's article 'Growing up with trains' in the October issue of ARH as our 'Explorer Page'. This also provided an opportunity to include images that were not able to be included in the original article.

Robert Fisher

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Cover Image: Locomotive 3661 at the head of an ARHSnsw tour train crossing the North Coast Daylight Express headed by 4007 at Weismantels on 24 September 1966.

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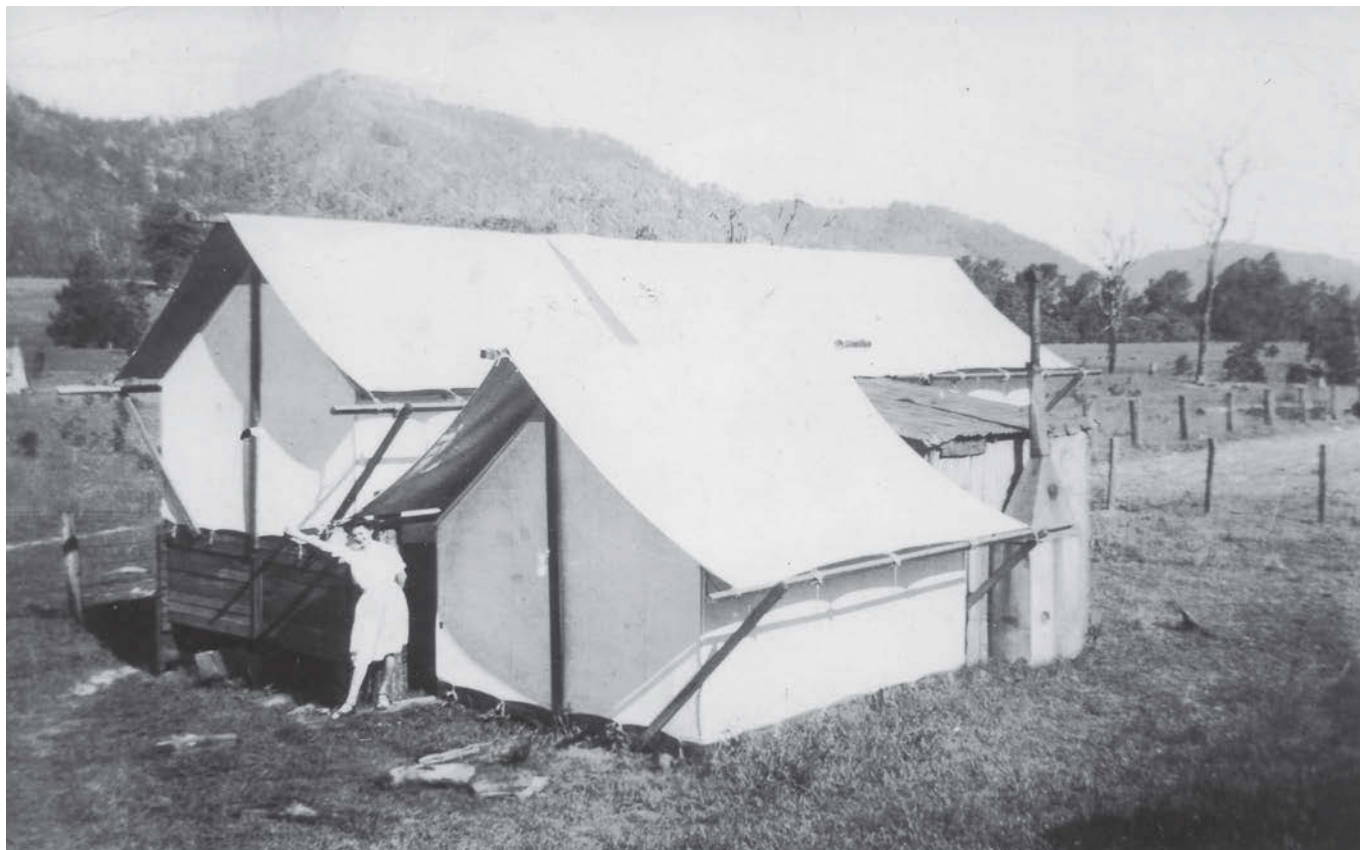
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Letters: We publish a selection of letters depending on space allowances. Letters should be kept to around 250 words and preferably be sent via email.



Hazel Barnard happily waves from her new home, the tent beside the track at Weismantels, in late 1948. The kitchen is beside the small tent with its prominent chimney. BARNARD FAMILY COLLECTION

JOHN AND HAZEL BARNARD: their tent years at Weismantels

Kathryn White

John and Hazel Barnard (née Chirgwin) were married in their mid-twenties, on 7 August 1948 at Hurstville NSW, having previously become engaged in 1947. My father had always been known as 'John' this being his mother's choice of name and was known as such, until he found out that his father had registered his choice of name, on his birth certificate. Thus it was in later years when he required his birth certificate that he found out that he was really a 'William Charles Barnard' which was to say the least, quite a surprise. By this time, 'John' had stuck! But his official records were under his "new found" legal name.

My father and mother had met at Carlton (in Sydney, NSW) in the early 1940s when my father was at that time working in a butcher's shop and my mother was working as a secretary in a real estate agency across the road. The shopping centre was located next to Carlton Station. My father decided to join the railways for a more secure position.

John Barnard commenced service in the NSW Department of Railways on 29 June 1942 as a junior porter at Cronulla and became interested in training as a signaller. In those days an opportunity to begin to 'climb the ladder' in grades as a signaller, could be had if you were prepared to do country service.

Newly engaged, they decided they would begin their married life in the country, so John applied and commenced duty at Weismantels in 1947, as a Seventh Grade Signaller, on the North Coast Line. Weismantels, opened in March

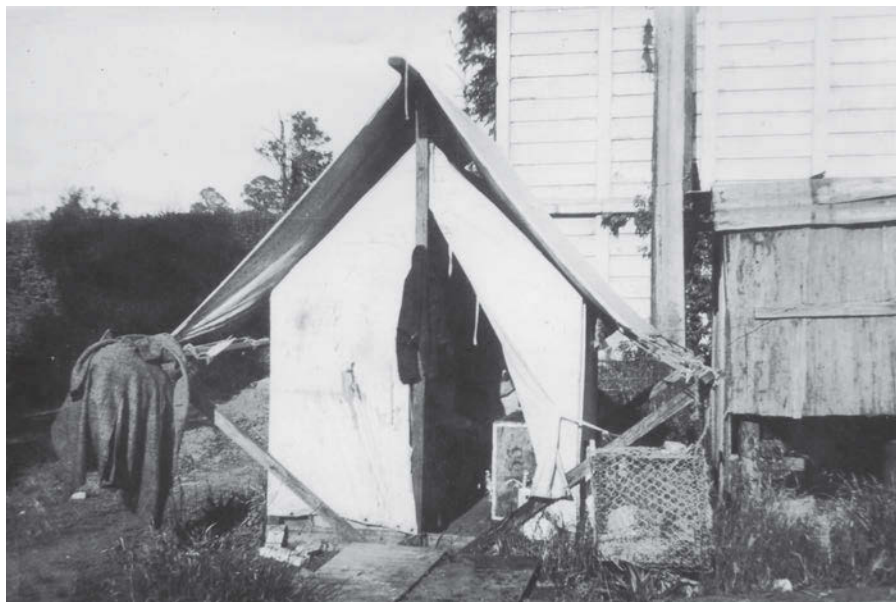
1934, approximately 280km from Sydney Terminal Station between Dungog and Gloucester. According to NSW Rail.net records, two other signallers were stationed there and Dad was to join them.

My mother remained with her parents at Hurstville and was preparing for their wedding. Friends donated their ration coupons towards her wedding dress material, as at this time rationing just after WW II was still in existence. Her mother made the wedding cake, also with the aid of coupons from friends as gifts for the bride! My grandmother on the Barnard side (by then a widow) owned a florist shop in Carlton and gave all the floral arrangements for their wedding day.

STARTING AT WEISMANTELS

Upon arrival at Weismantels, Dad was living temporarily in the 'bachelors' quarters', which comprised a single primitive-looking canvas tent near the signal box. Dad kept a pet ferret to help him hunt rabbits. The engaged couple corresponded regularly and my mother used to give train drivers at Central Station some hot chips wrapped in newspaper, kept warm in the engine, then into a canvas bag and dropped at Weismantels as "special delivery" so my mother told me. My father would say: "they were still hot, too!"

My mother described in a letter to me (as she had recently found the photo and had sent me a copy) that the above



John Barnard's tent at Weismantels when he was first posted there in 1947. The ferret cage is at the right of the tent, with the "primitive cooking area" further to the right.

BARNARD FAMILY COLLECTION, COURTESY KATHRYN WHITE

is the 'original tent accommodation in 1947' supplied by the railway department for my father as a bachelor and was the only accommodation available to him. Built behind the Weismantels signal box and on the right of the 'Ritz' (as Mum named it), there was a primitive cooking area. The ferret lived in the cage next to it near the entrance of the tent. On the left of the picture, the 'blanket' is drying. This was an old Army overcoat bought at a disposal store for 2s 6d. Inside the tent was a tea chest which contained all of Dad's worldly goods.

A single bed completed the 'accommodation'. One of the signalmen at Weismantels, a practical joker, curled a dead snake on the end of his bed on the 'blanket', so when Dad awoke he saw it there and broke into a sweat! But it did not move at all and so he realised he had been 'had'. Dad jumped up and laughter from his new companions broke into the air! Needless to say, in time, Dad also added his own practical jokes in return, although all in good fun. And by the look of things, he needed that 'woman's touch' for domestic arrangements at Weismantels.

MARRIED LIFE IN THE TENT

Thankfully better accommodation was prepared for the new bride in the form of a part wooden cabin/part canvas tent 'set-up' near the signal box and railway line, so at long last the 'bachelors' quarters' could be abandoned. At their wedding in 1948, my uncle said in good humour that my mother had waited for her "knight in shining armour" who was now going to carry her off on his charger to his ... TENT! And when they arrived by steam train after their honeymoon, apart from a warm welcome there was a sign waiting for them, with decorated bunting on their tent which said: "Welcome to the Love Nest".

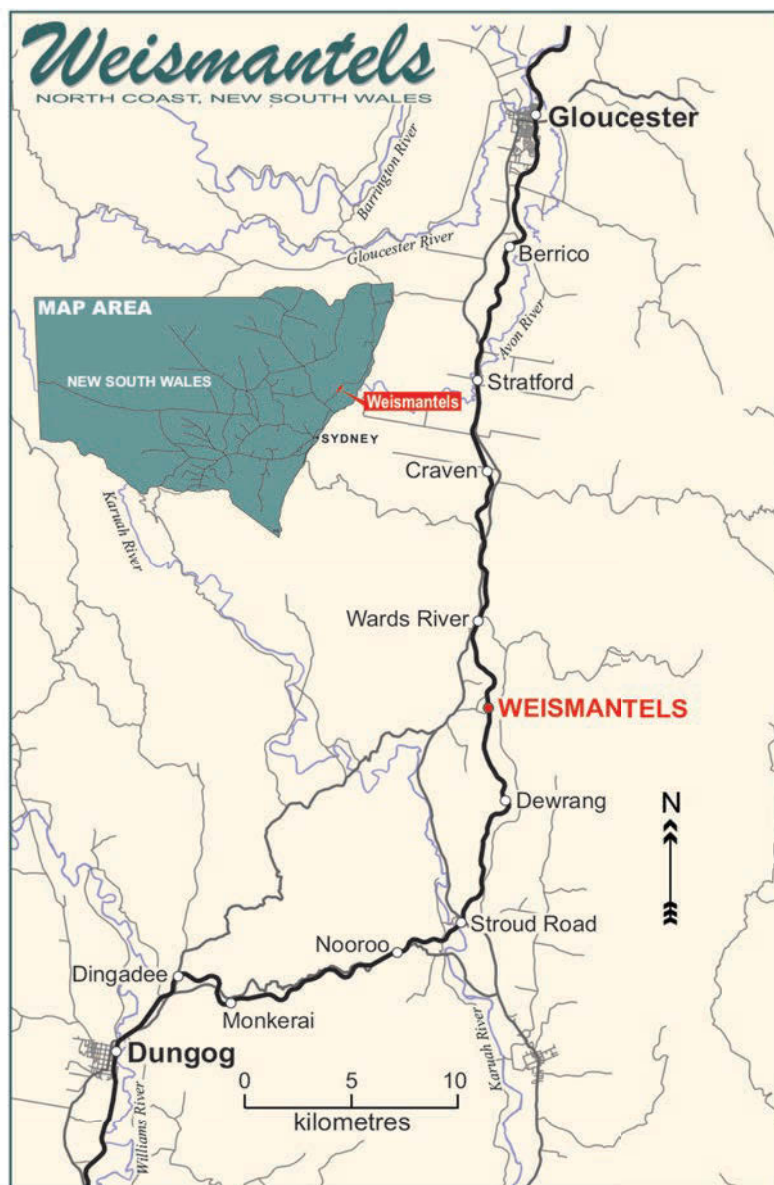
My mother was a 'city girl' young and in good health (like my father) with a happy nature and bright outlook, ready for new horizons and she always told me those early years were her happiest

in their tent.

I have grown up with stories of those years and many and varied they are. I too have a love of steam trains and railway yarns, just like my Dad and Mum. My first home was also the TENT though too young for personal memories. My parents were great storytellers and I remember my mother's laughter after the stories were told again with fresh vigour, as if only yesterday. Of course my stories are mainly from what my parents have told me and the minute details such as signal box details or conditions of employment, etc, at Weismantels, would require another research project.

'The Tent', being situated right next to the North Coast Railway Line, the various express passenger trains and goods trains thundering so close, must have taken a little adjustment I imagine.

There apparently was some form of divided rooms within the tent, created with the aid of decorative curtains my mother made; while visitor's accommodation was available





The location of the Barnard's tent beside the North Coast Railway tracks at Weismantels is evident in this photo. The two water tanks were replenished by the Railways Department as required, and the toilet is in the left foreground. BARNARD FAMILY COLLECTION

also in a smaller tent behind the main one, and next to the kitchen section with chimney.

As there was no electricity for light,

kerosene lamps were lit at night.

There was a record-player that looked like a suitcase that you opened and wound-up in order to play a 78rpm



Hazel and John Barnard on their wedding day in Hurstville in 1948. Hazel would soon experience a very different community and life-style. BARNARD FAMILY COLLECTION

record. A collection of popular music of the times was played on this machine. Dad also had a 'cat's whisker' crystal radio set to tune into stations. Mum missed her piano, which she had played back at Hurstville, but "made do" as she always said.

My adventurous grandfather could not resist visiting with my grandmother. Pop Chirgwin did everything he could while at Weismantels, from fishing, shooting rabbits, playing tennis on the court next to the signal box and climbing the mountain nearby, to a cave that could only be seen at certain times of the day when the sun shone in a certain place. There were legends that this was a bushranger's hideout with the name of 'Captain Thunderbolt', which I thought when young, sounded like a possible candidate for the Sunday comic strips of the mid-1950s.

So on Dad's day off, the two men set out with a haversack of refreshments. The cave proved to be a tad further than it looked to be and they found it to be bat-ridden. Home later than expected to worried women-folk, not too many cave-finding expeditions occurred after this initial experience. My grandmother, much more sedate, was just content to be quietly visiting her daughter and later her new baby

granddaughter, and enjoying helping with the daily chores.

My mother spoke lovingly of her old-fashioned cast iron fuel stove housed with an attached exterior pipe for the smoke outlet under a corrugated-iron roof section. She kept the stove pristine by polishing it with a black polish regularly and always said that her baked dinners and scones were the best she had ever cooked. No electric or gas stove she ever owned afterwards, could come up to the standard of this ancient marvel.

Dad chopped wood nearby to keep the 'home fires burning'; for on the colder nights it was a popular place to be where my father played his harmonica and stories were told. His favourite tune he played for Mum, even until recent years, was the 1937 song *When It's Springtime in the Rockies*. Nearby tanks held water; while the toilet facilities were the famous 'dunnies' outside the tent. If toilet paper ran out, Dad said with a grin: "there was always the newspaper". I thought that newspaper was used only for the fish and chips you bought at the shops! I told Dad to which he gave his hearty chuckle. I always got: "you are far too soft!"

My mother did have one 'disaster', however, on the fuel stove. This was when she made some stick-jaw toffee from a recipe book for the first time and offered some to another worker who was passing by. She was a little upset he had not said "thank you" after he tried the toffee and just left without a word. My father then came in and announced: "Any wonder! H..... was trying to get his false teeth apart at



An unidentified railway fettler, Frank ('Pop') Chirgwin and John Barnard about to set off from Weismantels on another adventure. BARNARD FAMILY COLLECTION

the water tank!" Yes, it certainly was a 'successful' batch of stick-jaw toffee!

Another time Mum had some ordered Epsom salts which arrived by train in a brown paper bag. My father was having problems with constipation, and it was suggested as a remedy, but with no instructions. Not knowing what dose to give, she later found it was enough "to kill a horse"; and as a result, my father was sitting on the toilet between trains and guzzling water for a week, but as my mother said: "at least he was cured!" This story turned up on the radio program *Australia All Over* one Sunday morning many years later and my mother could not believe that another railwayman of the time still remembered what had happened. But once again, her laughter rang out at the memory, but Dad for some strange

reason, just gave me one of his 'not funny' looks!

THE RAILWAY COMMUNITY

Despite their location, Mum and Dad were not really isolated. The other ladies who had railway working husbands would add a 'little civilisation' to their surroundings by having the best tablecloths spread for morning tea parties on occasion with an opportunity for a 'chin wag'.

There were also comings and goings on the small platform at Weismantels Siding. Dad had an extra duty as a postman where items were sent and collected in a locked bag and distributed by him at the signal box. My father was very proficient in first-aid all his life, due to his early training as a signalman which was a requirement in those days and came in handy even during later years, when he managed to save a life before an ambulance arrived.

In the wider circle of the community, there were also the barn dances which my parents relished as entertainment and great fun if it were not Dad's turn for signalman duty. How did you know a barn dance was on? A man on horseback rode by, stopped briefly playing a fiddle to let you know when and galloped off to the next location!

Boredom never seemed to enter the equation. For picnics Dad and Mum went on the railway trike to Wards River when trains were not due for some time, although I believe 'picnics' were not on the official list of duties for a trike ride!



John and Hazel Barnard on a trike beside the Weismantels Signal Box, with John pretending to 'whip' Hazel into action in the summer of 1948. BARNARD FAMILY COLLECTION



A tennis court at Weismantels contributed to the social activities of the railway people based there. Here John Barnard posed at the signal box ready for a game of tennis.
BARNARD FAMILY COLLECTION

The Power House Museum quotes that according to the railways' 1945 *Book of Rules and Regulations*:

An employee must not use a tricycle unless he can read and write, and has in his possession a watch which shows the correct railway time, a copy of the last issue of the Working Timetable corrected to date and applying to the District in which the tricycle is being used.

It is also noted it was "well known" that trikes were also used for personal travel by railway employees to dances for example, or in this case ... picnics!

Because I have always associated Weismantels as my first home too, I looked up a little history of the original family to settle in the area. The first Weismantel family members had arrived in Port Jackson in 1852, being Richard and Catherine who had emigrated from Winkel in Germany. The name itself translates into English as 'White Cloak' and the Weismantel family bought land in the area from around 1863. The railway line obviously went through their land. I thought this English translation most appropriate, for in a way, the tent was like a 'white cloak' at the time; as Dad said that "it kept the rain out"! There were also Weismantel family descendants still

living nearby in the late 1940s and early 1950s as their farm also sold produce and my mother said they visited the family regularly as they were not too distant from the tent.

My mother said there some unwelcome visitors that came to the Weismantels tents too, namely live snakes (this time) with an accompanying scream from the ladies that could be heard miles away, the men of course coming to the rescue. Dad killed one snake under these circumstances and to Mum he became "my hero!" thereafter.



A photograph of paddocks at Weismantels during the 1949–1950 floods from the Barnard's back fence. BARNARD FAMILY COLLECTION

THE BIG WET

It was not always 'roses and sunshine' in the tent: there were the memorable floods of June 1949 and September 1950 when Mum and Dad were at Weismantels. Weeks before I was born, my mother had gone to stay with her parents at Hurstville, as she was booked in at Crown Street Women's Hospital in Sydney. She had travelled by train to Sydney every few months to see a specialist in Macquarie Street beforehand and I just happened to be born at the time of the worst floods in NSW history.

To give an idea one paper stated: 'Sydney, June 19th 1949':

Seven persons are dead (drowned) and at least 25,000 homeless in one of the most disastrous floods New South Wales has ever experienced. Town halls, court offices, other public halls and any big buildings capable of accommodating people have been turned into refuge centres for the evacuated homeless in the northern towns. Maitland authorities today commandeered a quantity of milk, fruit, vegetables, fish and other food which was in trucks at Maitland railway station just as flood waters were entering the trucks which later in the day submerged. With vast areas of the northern dairy country cut off, the milk supplies reaching Sydney today are only one-third of normal requirements. There has been no express train service between Sydney and Brisbane since Thursday night. In some districts the week's rainfall has been as high as 16 inches. In Sydney almost 12 inches fell between last Monday and this afternoon, when the sun appeared briefly for the first time for



A double family celebration: John (right) and Hazel with daughter Kathryn are joined by Hazel's brother Stan Bryant (left) and his wife Gwen with their daughter—Kathryn's 'twin cousin' Leila—born two days after Kathryn, at the Bryant home in Sydney during July 1949 before their return to Weismantels. Photographs of John in a suit are rare. BARNARD FAMILY COLLECTION

a week. A rainfall record for June for Sydney of 1231 points was reached to-day.¹

My father, having been notified by phone in the signal box that Mum had delivered their first born, a daughter and both doing well, was determined to come to Sydney and was given leave. He could not come by train, but hitchhiked his way along roads in trucks and managed to get to Sydney safely and, in time, all three were home again safe and sound at Weismantels.

The new nickname for the family unit Mum said was "We Three" ... thereafter during those years, until such time as my only brother John was born, ten years later! My mother kept in her large camphor box, the total bill from the Macquarie Street specialist and receipt for her confinement. It cost Dad £15 15s all up! And he paid it within a month of receiving the bill. This must have been a large amount for a signalman but it makes me proud to think: "nothing but the best for Hazel". This was his attitude all their married life.

SOME ADVENTURES

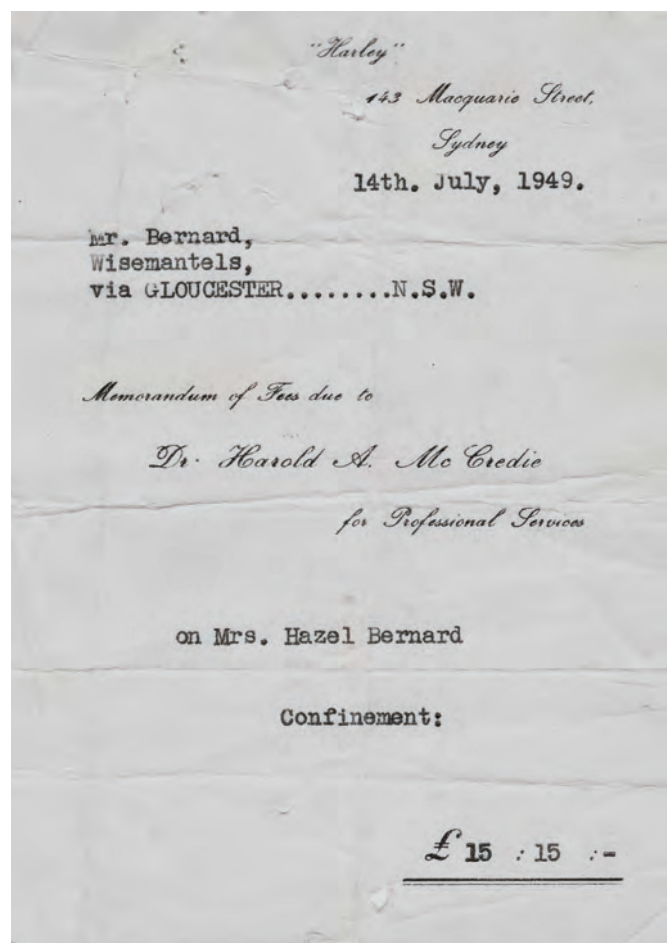
In those days, it was a much more relaxed style regarding living "by the rules". There was a lot of railway camaraderie

in those days. Dad had "an arrangement" with drivers of a particular train to slow right down at the Weismantels signal box so he could run and jump near the door of the last carriage which could be opened and Dad climbed aboard. This arrangement worked well except for one occasion when the door would not open and Dad could not get in. So he held on to support rails as the train travelled along the track and through tunnels,, until it passed one station where a signalman spotted him clinging on and raised the alarm, so the train briefly did an unscheduled stop and Dad literally "fell into the carriage".

And as far as travelling goes, there were times when they had their railway holiday break and they usually went back to Hurstville by train to my grandparents' home and from there visited friends, went on outings, visited other relatives, etc. Mum even got to play her piano again, her favourite being *Somewhere Over the Rainbow*.

One of the visits at this time was to Mum's bridesmaid, Joan, who told me on my parent's 50th wedding anniversary that she was so pleased to see my mother again as she had been worrying about her living accommodation. From her own comfortable brick home, Joan could not imagine living in a tent next to a railway line. She must have compared it in her mind to church missionaries going to remote lands, which their mutual church supported.

As for my mother, I am sure she would have assured Joan that in life, you have to "keep your sunny side up", have faith and if you are with loved ones, you can make anything work. Besides, she really did enjoy her tent!



The invoice (shown here) and receipt for Hazel's confinement in July 1949 were kept by her parents. BARNARD FAMILY COLLECTION



The cabins that replaced the tent accommodation in 1950. 'We Three' lived in the first cabin in this photograph, with the signal box in the background. BARNARD FAMILY COLLECTION

Apart from the pet ferrets kept in a separate enclosure—which Dad liked and Mum did not—they both enjoyed a pet cat or two whilst they were living in the tent, 'Spotty', the "chief rodent killer", being one of them. Mum, however, nearly suffered a serious injury as she saw 'Spotty' on the railway line as she heard in the distance a train, so she ran to save the feline, but tripped and fell heavily down the side of the line in the dirt. Clutching 'Spotty' as the train went by, she returned to a firm lecture from Dad not to do such a thing again. 'Spotty' did not appreciate all the drama either. Knowing my mother, her white handkerchief would have been pulled out of an apron pocket and her tears always melted my Dad's sternness. It worked every time!

Dad and Mum also got to know quite a number of fettlers and their wives together with the ganger supervisors, who also lived in tents along the track working on their section. During this period after the Second World War, it was a major policy of the McKell NSW Labor Government to achieve full employment again, so there was a rapid increase in railway workers. It was certainly a labour-intensive job for those fettlers who kept the tracks in order on a daily basis. Dad had a special regard for them for he said they were "true battlers" and "tough workers" with hammers "as big as beer barrels" to work with which weighed around 16 pounds [about 7kg]!

Dad got to associate with the fettlers personally, as they too, collected their mail from the signal box. Some were recent migrants getting a new start in a new land after the war. There was plenty of manual work for them and Aboriginal fettlers repairing the flood damage to the tracks. For example, in the Maitland area over the two years of floods, some houses had been flooded seven times! Such was the scale of the disaster.

AN UPGRADED HOME!

Sometime in the early 1950s, the tent was dismantled and replaced by cabins. My mother said she cried for the tent that was "her home" but the cabin was an improvement just the same. Then the second flood occurred in September 1950 and "We Three" were cut off by the flood waters rising in the river systems. This included the nearby 'Mammy Johnsons River' named after a 19th century Aboriginal midwife who had greatly assisted pioneer women, but sadly drowned in the river whilst travelling to attend a squatter's wife. The floods continued to rise along the North Coast line. Mum had missed the 1949 flood as she had been in Sydney with her parents prior to my birth, but not this time.

Our shopping orders came by train from the major townships, Gloucester or Dungog when Mum and Dad did not go to the towns by train. They phoned their order from the signal box and the shopkeeper would take the goods to the local station for a train delivery as a service to railway employees. This proved timely as Mum ordered a large order of baby food and other items for she told me she had had a premonition about being cut off by the flood waters as already the rain was pounding, which to her "sounded like flood rain".

The shopkeeper thought this was unnecessary but Mum was listening to her instincts and sure enough, they were cut off for some time soon after, for the train that brought the goods was one of the last to get through. As Dad said: "with one bullet left to shoot a rabbit", everything was running out, when they heard a "cockle-doodle-do" train whistle shrilling loudly and repeatedly. It was the first train to come through after the flood, with a joyful "welcoming commit

tee” to greet it. To add to this, Dad mentioned that it had been ‘stand-down’ for signalmen at the time to add to their worries until the trains operated again. And they were paid by train.

As it happened coincidentally the ‘pay-master’, who handed out the pay from the train carriage especially adapted for the task at various stations and platforms along the way, also retired near where Dad lived for many years. They took up many a yarn about the “good old days” of the 1940s and 1950s. Dad’s friend still managed to live next to a railway line even in retirement years.

“We Three” left Weismantels in 1951, so my father had been there for four years and my mother for three years, while I was two years old. Dad eventually occupied the position of Fourth Class Signaller at Chullora and he was able to build our first family home. In addition he gained a satisfactory knowledge of first-aid and station management, as well as shunting and guard’s duties. He also passed a written examination in Sections 1 and 2 of Coaching Accounts (Modified Standard) after 22 years of service.²

RETIREMENT

Dad and Mum moved to Kiama in the early 1970s and eventually opened a butcher’s shop there. How the circle had turned and signal boxes were closing down! Their shop was very successful with my mother as the shop assistant until their retirement years. She was known for her happy disposition and laughter! It was named ‘Little Blowhole Butchery’ and, because Dad was a Justice of the Peace (JP) he had to put a sign up in the shop with his ‘legal name’—William Charles Barnard. Accordingly, at Kiama where they had moved, he became known as ‘Bill’! His father had won this round after all!

An era had passed, for with a heavy heart Dad revisited Weismantels with my only brother John (born 10 years after our tent experience) when he found the signal box sadly demolished with only a concrete slab remaining. Modern trains went by still, but the familiar mountain ranges were there to welcome him. He silently stared

for a time my brother said, no doubt rekindling memories of those early years of married life in “the Tent”. Weismantels had been closed as a siding on 29 June 1975.

From his home at Kiama, Dad could see the trains on the South Coast Line near Easts Beach and when the first electric train arrived at Kiama Station in November 2001, as an interchange station for electric services from Sydney (and then diesel services to Bomaderry) there he was to greet it with a railway hat (that looked a tad American) and steam train pins stuck onto it. Dad was part of the history of Australian railways again and never lost his love for steam trains either.

On a Sunday when I visited their home in recent years, our treat together was to watch ‘Steam Train’ videos. Why he even could tell what grade of coal was used by the colour of the smoke! Steam trains also are ‘in my blood’ and in the 1950s, I have fond memories of carriages with marvelously comfortable seats and glass decanters for cool water drinks, ornate racks above for luggage, the click-clack of the wheels and the motion of the train, the train whistle with its mournful sound and making sure you did not stick your head out of the window in case some smoke cinders caught you in the eye! As Dad said “they are the closest thing to living things” and I would have to agree. Catching a steam train at Central Station with the clock tower and steam hissing is a fond childhood memory, together with a friendly wave from the driver as you walked to the engine at the front before its time to leave. And in those days, you could set

your watch by a train timetable. That my Dad helped in making sure trains arrived safely was a connection always for me, to those railway years.

Dad and Mum were married for 63 years when my mother passed away in 2012. My Dad was a robust man who still did the cooking, lawn mowing, gardening, shopping, etc, as Mum’s health was not as robust as his. Yet within 100 days, he passed away too. Their headstone reads: “Together Forever”. They had both lived to their late 80s and were great-grandparents by this time. But before Dad passed away, he dictated a few Weismantel yarns to me, a few of which follow.

But, even their final resting place has a railway story for Kiama General Cemetery faces the South Coast Railway line near Bombo Station as well as Bombo Beach and the Kiama Lighthouse area. For it was a very unusual story indeed.

Dad went to buy Mum her yearly woollen handmade socks at Gerringong and decided to buy a “bottle of lemonade” for her, but on the way back was so unimpressed by the cost—“a man could have bought three large bottles at the supermarket”—that he missed the turn-off and ended up near the cemetery. He decided to drive in as he had been thinking about their final resting place, now both in their 80s. There he saw rows that faced east towards the railway track. “This is it!” he said and soon after went to Kiama Municipal Council with the strict instruction “the row has to face the railway line” and thus it was and here they rest where many a train still passes by.



RIGHT: John Barnard stands on the foundations of the Weismantels Signal Box during his nostalgic return to the site with his son John. The familiar mountain range stands in the background. BARNARD FAMILY COLLECTION



In this circa 1959 scene taken from a passenger train in Weismantels loop, diesel-electric locomotive 4301 passes the signal box with one of the staff cabins in the foreground. A short platform had been added to the signal box, while washing dries on the clothes line.
G W LILICO COLLECTION, ARHNSW RRC ARCHIVES, 039201

JOHN BARNARD'S YARNS

The shopping spree

We used to go into Gloucester, which was about 10 miles away, to do our shopping. But the only way there was by a pick-up train. This was a train that used to stop at every nook and cranny along the line, to pick up goods, people, etc. So this was our only means of shopping by ourselves.

Now coming home one particular day, the ganger Tom and his wife Mavis had been to Gloucester shopping and his wife had a big paper bag, which they used to give you those days, full of their groceries for the week. The pick-up train stopped at our crossing loop which had no platform for unloading, so Tom, being a great gentleman that he was, jumped down and held his arms up and beckoned Mavis to jump! Now Mavis was no small girl, she had a bit of weight about her and trying to balance a bag full of goodies under her arm and jumped! But the problem was she jumped and straddled Tom around his neck. Tom went backwards with her on top, down the bank together. His arms were like a helicopter blade, they were fanning the air, the large paper bag with the groceries burst, broken eggs, spilt tea, rolling oranges, milk and bread all went with them.

When Tom eventually got to his feet, I can't tell you the words he called Mavis. But it would make a bullock teamster driver sound like a Sunday school teacher. Tom was a pretty tough sort of a bloke, because you had to be in those days, he got over it alright, but I don't think Mavis would ever do that again, I'm sure!

The Streaker!

This was at the same crossing loop around about the same time too, the early 1950s. As it happened, it was a very, very hot day—it must have been touching the 100s in the old Fahrenheit scale. In those days, the ladies used to have a get together, a cup of tea and scones on the lawn, between the cabins and the signal box near the railway line. They used to meet once a week on a Saturday and chat away like women do. As I said, it was a hot day and Mick (I won't tell you his second name) was the signalman in charge of the signal box. He had about 20 minutes to wait for the next train, so he pulled off the full road, the Distant, Home and Starting signals, hung the staff on the telephone where we used to always hang it, ready to exchange as the train went past.

So having a little bit of a break, Mick decided to duck down to the swimming hole, which was part of the creek there, about 220 yards from the signal box. Up in the North Coast with no-one about, you went 'skinny-dipping', so Mick went in.

Some local lads there having a joke, pinched his shorts and clothes. Mick got out of the swimming hole, could hear the train in the distance. He looked around for his shorts and clothes but could not find them. As he had a full road pulled off with staff ready for exchange, he had no choice but to tear back to the signal box 'full Monty'! He rushed past the ladies, still outside enjoying their tea and scones. With the initial shock seeing 'Mick the Streaker', one of the ladies collapsed, the ganger's wife said she married the wrong man and the others just screamed!

But apart from that, he got back just as the train arrived and rushed out and exchanged the staff. The fireman nearly fell off the footplate and the engine driver let out two big whistles “wha-oooooooo”; “wha-oooooooo”.

I don’t think Mick thought this was much of a joke and for weeks and weeks he was looking for those guys who pinched his shorts and clothes. If he had got hold of them, I don’t know what he would have done!

Believe it or not!

Several years later, I was in charge of a signal box in the Sydney Metropolitan area where facilities were available at sidings to stow empty train carriages. This particular night, we had to stow the empty train carriages in number one south siding. These are controlled by a ball-lever held over to enable the points to be changed for the train to enter number one siding.

There was a thunderstorm that night and the guard from the train was sitting on the ball-lever waving this train back into the siding. Everything was going well, until suddenly around 9.20pm, a lightning strike hit the stanchion alongside where the guard was sitting on the points. Next thing a huge arc went from the stanchion to the ground frame where he was sitting. The guard leapt into the air and took off in a panic as you can imagine but the lever went back to normal and not being held down, changed the points under the first carriage and the engine. So it derailed and went over in the dirt.

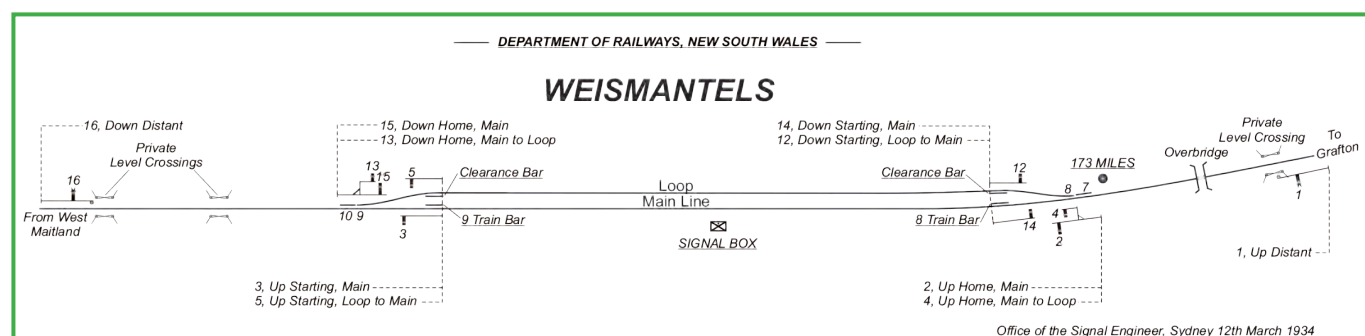
As it turned out, I backed the guard’s story at the Departmental Enquiry because I witnessed the event from the signal box. From the blackened burnt out wires on the stanchion they worked out that it must have been hit by a lightning strike and the guard got away with it!

END NOTES

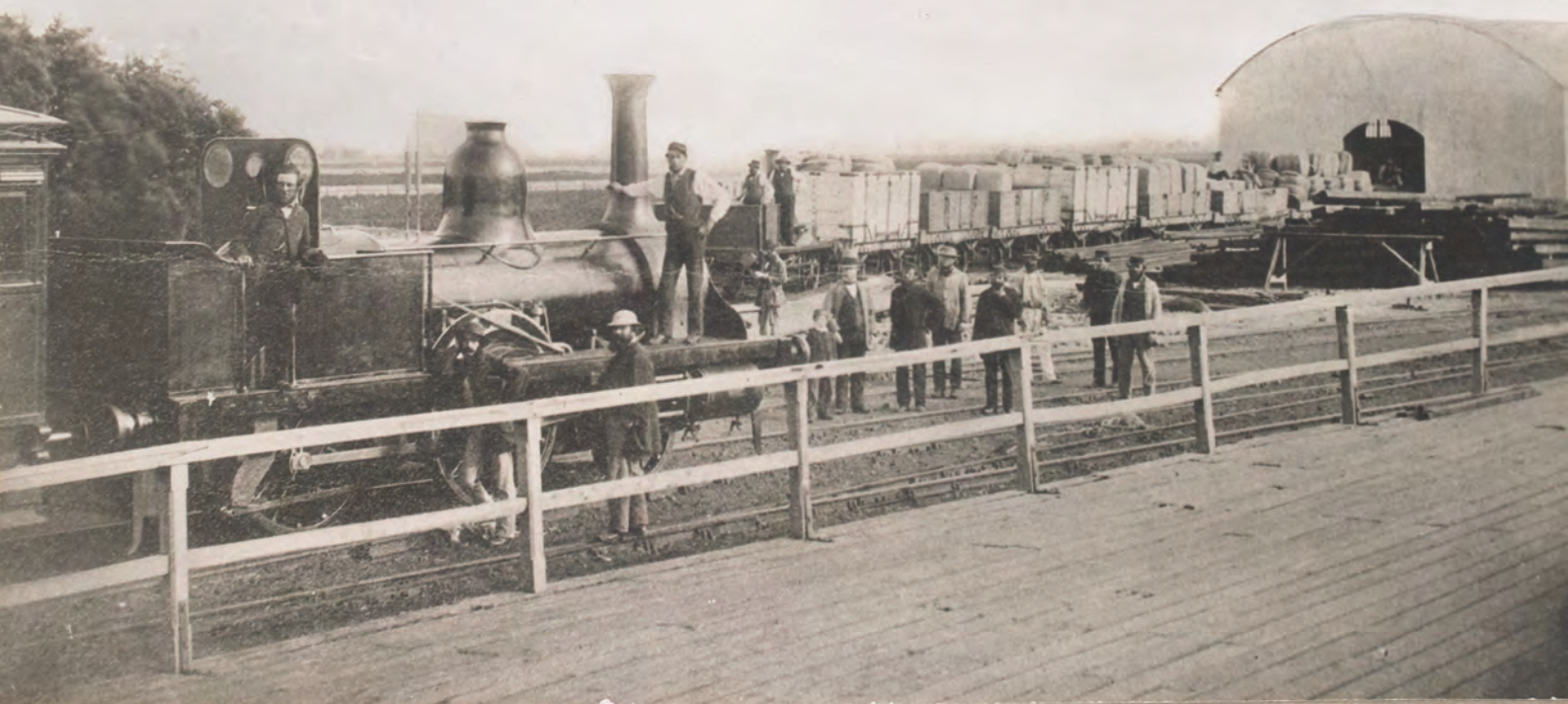
1. *Kalgoorlie Miner* (WA), 20 June 1949, p4, ‘Disasterous Floods; Devastation in NSW—Seven Persons Dead’.
2. Letter dated 3 January 1967 from the Chief Traffic Manager, Central Station Sydney, Department of Railways, New South Wales.



John Barnard poses in front of Intercity V Set 29 during the official opening ceremony for the extension of electric trains to Kiama in November 2001. KATHRYN WHITE



Track and signal diagram for Weismantels dated 12 March 1934. DEPARTMENT OF RAILWAYS NSW, ARHNSW RAILWAY RESOURCE CENTRE



The Melbourne & Hobson's Bay Railway Company terminus at Sandridge (Port Melbourne) in January 1862, with a N Class 2-4-0T locomotive heading a passenger train in the foreground. A pier donkey and goods wagons are outside the goods shed in the background.¹
STATE LIBRARY OF VICTORIA, 10381/69334

ON THE LEVEL: VICTORIA'S FIRST LEVEL CROSSING

Peter Fisher

Victoria still has numerous level railway crossings, but in an era of heavier, higher speed trains the old passive stop-look-and listen signage system and even flashing lights invite disastrous vehicle-train collisions. This has led to the widespread adoption of boom barriers on passenger and main line goods routes; forewarning of approaching trains for road vehicles, notably trucks with LCAWS in response to the Kerang V-Line accident; and even grade separation with 35 level crossings now slated for grade separation under the 2015 State Budget.

Level crossings have been an ongoing social problem in Victoria for many decades. This article seeks to identify when and where was Victoria's first such level crossing—an infrastructure proffering some form of protection from vehicle-train collisions, not makeshift cart tracks across railway lines.

To answer this question we have to go back in time to the State's earliest railways bearing in mind that this was a period when manned gates were almost universally provided when busy and not so busy trafficked roads crossed railway lines.

This line of enquiry inevitably leads to the first Victorian railways, which initially were all privately owned. Some of

the thinking from that period is conveyed by the following letter to *The Argus* newspaper concerning trains on the Melbourne & Hobson's Bay Railway (M&HBR) branch to St Kilda. Clearly, opposition to roads crossing railways on the level had emerged in Victoria by May 1857 and this continued over succeeding generations:

RAILWAY CROSSING, SANDRIDGE ROAD.

To The Editor of *The Argus*.

Sir Allow me through the medium of your valuable journal to offer a suggestion to the directors of the above company, whereby the probability of serious accidents at the Sandridge road may be averted. I refer to the gates which will be thrown across the road every half hour when the trains are passing, and the danger of horses standing within a few feet of the line shying at the carriages as they fly past them. All fear on this ground may be removed by simply boarding the gates. Trusting that consideration for the public safety will induce the directors to adopt this suggestion,

I remain. Sir. yours. &c.

CAUTION. Emerald Hill. 6th May, 1857.

WHERE WAS THE FIRST GATED CROSSING?

The question thus arises was this the first gated crossing or did the line to Sandridge opened three years earlier have one or more such level crossings? A good starting point are the c1856 plans for the Sandridge and St Kilda railway lines.

At its terminus, Figure 1, there is a 'level crossing' denoted just short of the terminus enclosure (see p16). So what of that part of the drawing labelled 'level crossing'? It's certainly not an extension of a local street.

An 1858 photograph of the Town and Railway Piers suggests, the outward portion of the Railway Pier was congested with ships being unloaded during the gold rushes.² Much of this area was crown land until 1927, when the State Savings Bank began building homes at Garden City for its employees. Given how frenetic the arrivals were in 1856–57 with small boat owners ferrying people ashore (sailors had abandoned their ships to go to the goldfields) at outrageous charges, so much of 'the beach' may have been enlisted for landing people and goods.³ The arrivals famously trudged to the goldfields and would have been on foot in crossing the line from the west, but numbers slumped between 1858 and 1860.⁴

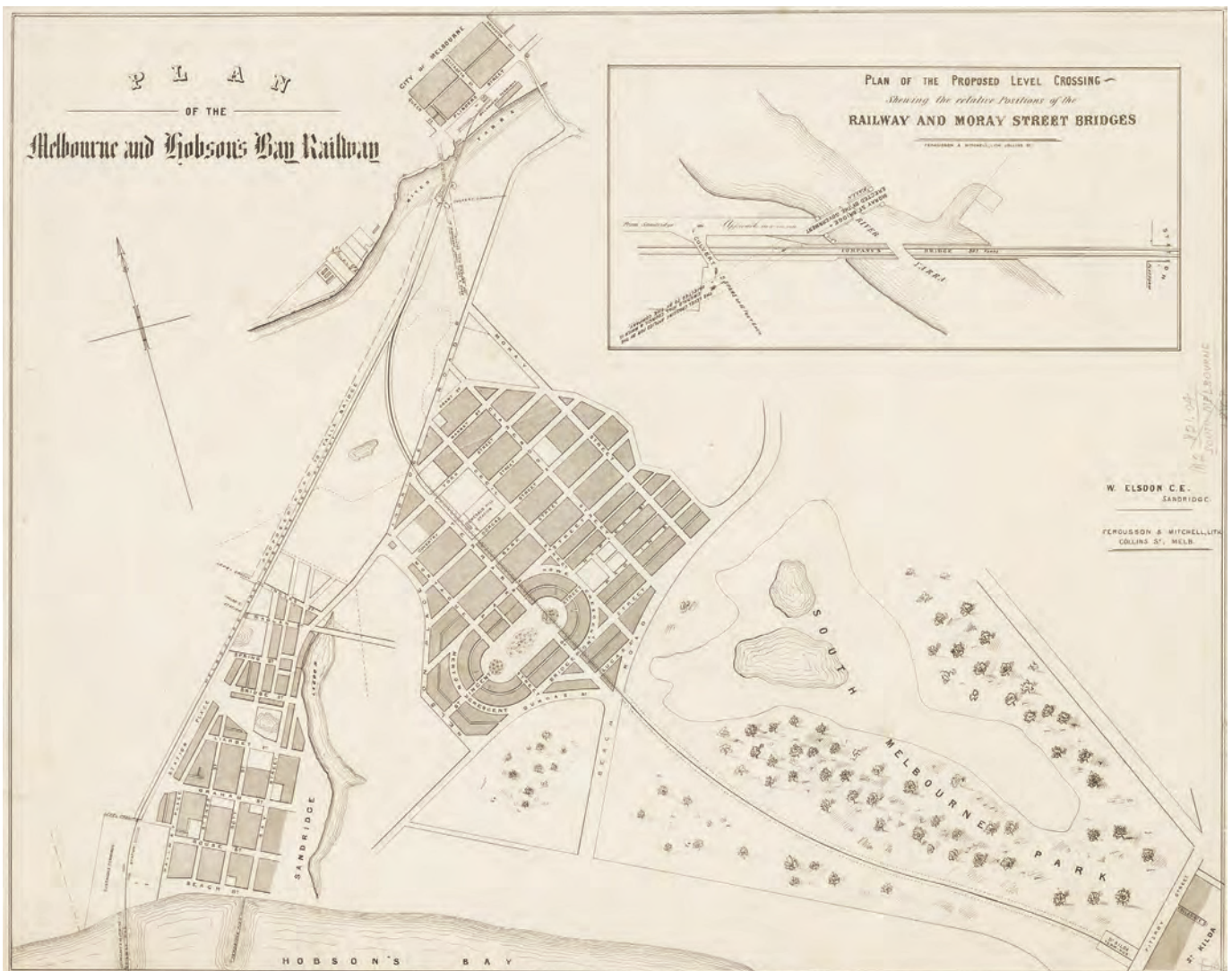
It would thus appear that the crossing's usage would have been restricted to any diggers landed to the west; workers

on foot most of whom probably lived in Sandridge; together with the occasional horse-drawn wagon accessing the goods shed and yard. As manned gates required two able bodied men at a combined wage of around £160 per annum, it is unlikely that the company would be prepared to commit to this amount for a crossing with limited road traffic.

Perhaps the decider is an 1860 map of Sandridge, which shows no level crossing in the position marked on the 1856 M&HBR plan [see p26, *ARH* September 2015].

Further up the line there's a level crossing designated at Ingles Street for a projected road to Sandridge running along the west flank of the line. This was presumably to act as an alternative to providing a Moray Street level crossing. The road was never built so the crossing never eventuated, as it would have led to a swamp. The ill-fated Sandridge Pier and Dock Tramway Company's line (see 'Pier Pressure', *ARH* September 2015) was to cross the railway at this point, too. Indeed it was viewed by M&HBR as restricting the passage of trains.

The railway company steadfastly refused to build a level crossing at Moray Street (now Queensbridge Street) using every legal ploy despite it being designated on their plans, forcing heavier road traffic to take a circuitous route via St Kilda Road and Princes Bridge into town. The M&HBR clearly saw this tactic as enhancing their commercial advantage over road conveyance. But, some took advantage of a shortcut via a culvert opening to pass under the line which



Plan of the Melbourne and Hobson's Bay Railway [cartographic material, 1854-1857]. Note insert of 1875 plan for the level crossing and Moray-street overbridges developed by Robert Watson. Courtesy STATE LIBRARY NSW, CO21130001U



FIGURE 1: Enlarged section of the terminus at Sandridge showing a 'level crossing' just short of the M&HBRC terminus land.

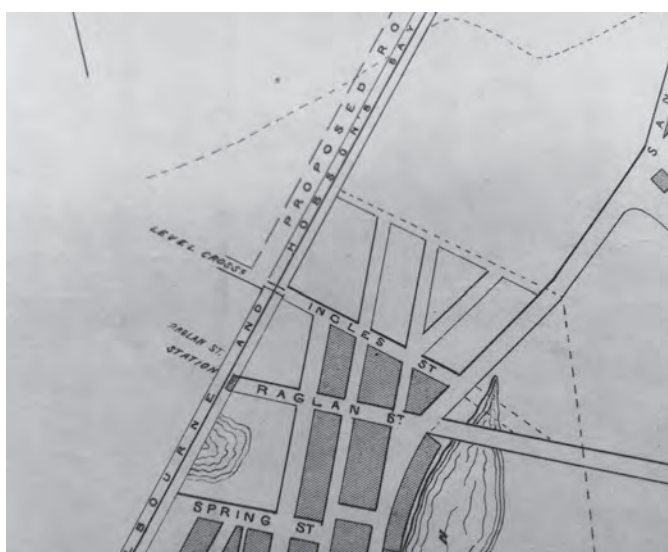


FIGURE 2: The projected level crossing at Ingles Street for a proposed road to Sandridge. The road and crossing did not eventuate.

was narrow and hazardous because of poor line of sight. The lack of an adequate crossing came to be an ongoing sore with the residents of Emerald Hill and Sandridge, leading to a meeting at the All Nations Hotel attended by some 200 to 300 people on 3 May 1861:

A public meeting of the inhabitants of Sandridge was held last evening at the All Nations Hotel, for the purpose of considering the desirability of furthering the steps initiated by the inhabitants of Emerald Hill to promote the passage through the Legislature of the bill now before Parliament, to compel the Hobson's Bay Railway Company to construct crossings over certain streets in the line of railway. Between 200 and 300 persons, including many of the principal residents of Sandridge, were present, and Mr. Morley, the chairman of the municipality, presided.

The CHAIRMAN opened the business of the evening by reading the requisition forwarded to him, in compliance with which he had called them together. He also ... introduce[d] Councilor Gardner, of Emerald Hill, ... to the meeting.

Mr. GARDNER then gave a short history of the transactions between the Emerald Hill Council and the Hobson's Bay Railway Company. Shortly after the formation of the municipality of Emerald Hill, it was seen to be necessary to procure a shorter means of communication between the hill and the city than

the present one by Princes Bridge; and, it being estimated that from a mile and a quarter to a mile and a half might be saved in the conveyance of goods and passengers, the municipal council devoted themselves to the carrying out of this desirable object. First Clarendon-street and then Ferrars-street were formed, with a view to their being carried over to the left bank of the Yarra, and the council called upon the Government to give the necessary, notices to the railway company to form a bridge to connect the lands severed by the railway, under the 38th clause of the company's act of incorporation. As to Clarendon-street, on the council making this application, the company did not then deny their liability to comply with it: ... [and] they prepared a plan of a bridge which they proposed to make. On the council receiving this plan, they found it to be a temporary wooden bridge—a bridge only, without approaches. The council demurred to this, and the Government had a plan prepared of a bridge which they proposed to the company to make.

The company then passed a resolution, to the effect that a level crossing would be sufficient for the purposes of the traffic for perhaps the next five years. Then followed debates and disputes between the council and the company, and the latter began to deny any obligation to form any crossings or bridges. The council then called on the Government to interfere, and a 'mandamus' was applied for in the Supreme Court. ... The council said they were willing to accept a sum of £15,000 in lieu of the company forming bridges, which duty the council were willing to perform. The company offered £5,000, and they requested the council to try the question of right on its merits, agreeing on their part not to take advantage of any technical objection, and the Supreme Court was to decide between them. ...

Finding it was useless to proceed further with a company who repudiated their obligations, the council called for assistance from the Government, and a bill was brought in, which provided that wherever "the Crown" was mentioned in any act, this term should be taken to mean "the Governor in Council". This bill was carried, but on its being sent to England, the Queen was advised to refuse her assent. ...

Matters remained for some time in 'status quo', but some few months ago the Council believed the time had come to take further action, and they [*Sic*] prepared a bill for the purpose of compelling the company to fulfil their obligations. The Council of Sandridge was requested to aid in the matter; the advantages to be gained were equally important to Sandridge, and the necessity of shortening the route was as appreciable by the residents and tradesmen of Sandridge as to the inhabitants of Emerald Hill. Besides, the question was not one of local interest alone; it affected, more or less immediately, the interests of all who wanted to diminish the cost of transit of goods from the seaboard to the metropolis or the interior.

The bill has been brought in, with the addition of a rider, providing one other crossing to Moray-street; that is, over land which was not a portion of the land originally granted by the Crown to the company. ... the bill mainly gave to the Crown, that is, the Governor in Council, the power to enable him to decide what crossings were necessary, and to compel the company to form them, or to permit the municipalities to form them. The bill was proceeded with; and what did the company next do? They proceeded by injunction to restrain the council from expending the municipal funds for the purpose of furthering the bill. The present state of the question then was, that the bill must be abandoned, or the inhabitants of Emerald Hill and Sandridge must raise the necessary funds to carry the bill through the Houses of Parliament.

Mr. MURPHY moved the first resolution, as follows:

"That this meeting sympathises with the efforts being made by the inhabitants of Emerald Hill to procure the passing of an act to enable the Governor in Council to compel the Hobson's Bay Railway Company to form such crossings over the railway to connect several lands as to the Governor in Council shall seem necessary, and pledge themselves to support the movement by every means in their power".⁵

MORAY STREET CROSSING SOLVED AT LAST!

The issue dragged on until 1875 when Robert Watson, the Victorian Railway's (VR) engineer, came up with a design that elevated the M&HBR line 17 feet, giving Moray Street a clearance of 28 feet for an underpass. Watson assumed there would be a new bridge over the Yarra River and, accordingly, he examined the option of a level crossing at Moray Street, or a bridge over the railway or a bridge under the line. *The Argus* described this in detail:

THE MORAY-STREET CULVERT

Robert WATSON, Resident Engineer. To the Secretary, Victorian Railways Railway Department, 6th April, 1875.

Sir, I have the honour to submit for the information of the the Commissioners a further report on the crossing of the M and H B Railway at Moray-street.

Before proceeding to consider the best way providing for the public road traffic where it crosses the M and H B Railway at Moray-street, I found it necessary to have a survey made and several sections taken, that in the event of a new bridge being at some future time erected over the river, the communication might be as direct as possible. There are three different ways of dealing with the matter:

1. By a level crossing in a straight line with Moray-street. A level-crossing at this place ... where both railway and road traffic are so great, would be very objectionable and dangerous, in fact, almost unworkable, and beside this, it would be expensive because in addition to the cost of the embankments forming the approaches, and the cost of the level crossing, gates, Sec, amounting to about £4,000, there must be added the cost of providing two able bodied men to look after the gates, each at 7s per diem, or say £5 per week—i.e. £260 per annum which capitalised means £5,200. I do not think the public would be satisfied, and the M and H B Railway Company might probably object to have a level crossing at this place
 2. By a bridge over the line. A bridge over the line at this place is more impracticable still The bridge would have to be made at least 17ft. above the present rail level, and the rails at present are lifted, above the level of Moray-street so that with a gradient of 1 in 25 the embankment would extend about 11 chains from the crossing of the line, and the slopes of the roadway, it be made wide enough for the traffic (say 60ft, besides, say, 10ft each side for footpaths—20ft. altogether), would render the adjacent frontages entirely worthless. By a bridge under the line. This refers to the Moray-street so that with a gradient of 1 in 25 the embankment would extend about 11 chains from the crossing of the side of the railway. On the Yarra side the objection would be still greater, for the cost of the new bridge over the Yarra at such a great elevation would be enormously increased I could not therefore recommend the adoption of a bridge over the line.
- A bridge under the line, either in a direct line with Moray street

so that with a gradient of 1 in 25 the embankment would extend about 11 chains from the crossing of the street or else at the centre of what is at present known as the Moray-street culvert ... in either case the centre line of the bridge under the railway should be in a direct line with the centreline of the future bridge over the Yarra. ...

Of the two sites mentioned for the bridge, viz., in line with Moray-street, ... or at centre of the present Moray-street culvert, ... I prefer the latter, because the former would not admit of nearly a good a gradient from the bridge under the railway to the bridge over the river and the bridge over the river could not be built until the present one is removed thereby obstructing the traffic for a considerable time. These objections do not present themselves if the site chosen for crossing the railway be at the centre of the Moray-street culvert and the line be direct from this point across the cut to the centre of Market-street where it joins Flinders-street and straight in the opposite direction until it intersects Moray-street the present bridge could no doubt be made to accommodate the trains whilst the new bridge is being built. ...

I have the honour to be sir your most obedient servant.

ROBERT WATSON Resident Engineer

Railway Department Melbourne 26th May 1875

Sir:—I have the honour to submit for the information of the honourable the Commissioner the following report in obedience to instructions received on the 8th ultimo having reference to the extension of Clarendon-street so that with a gradient of 1 in 25 the embankment would extend about 11 chains from the crossing of the M and H B United Railway at Clarendon-street so that with a gradient of 1 in 25 the embankment would extend about 11 chains from the crossing of the railway, if produced, would intersect the railway near the junction of the St Kilda and Sandridge lines at an angle of about 63 degrees. As the level of the rails at present [is only 15ft altitude], it would be necessary to raise the line 10ft, so as to secure sufficient headway.

The Emerald Hill Town Council wish to have the whole width of the street (90ft) continued across the railway and a headway of 10ft clear underneath I have assumed they will be satisfied with two footpaths each 18ft clear for pedestrians and two openings, each 28ft 6in clear, for vehicles. This would necessitate in addition two openings each of the same size as the footpaths to receive the slopes of the embankments. ...

The works contemplated in my estimate are simply those within the railway fences and may be thus summarised. Providing temporary lines for traffic, erection of iron bridge, cast iron cylinders filled with concrete, wrought iron girders and hardwood planking as shown on accompanying tracings; pitching and metalling road, gravelling and kerbing footpaths, removing and reconstructing portions of existing timber viaducts, earthwork to raise level of the line, and relaying lines with the necessary additional materials, fencing and drainage, raising footbridge over line.

The estimated cost of the above works of two clear spans each 28ft 6in and two clear spans each 18ft is £27,552, or if in lieu of two clear spans each 28ft 6in one clear span of 69ft be substituted, the estimated cost is £29,317.

I have the honour to be, sir, Your obedient servant,

ROBERT WATSON Resident Engineer.⁶

THE ST KILDA BRANCH

The company had extended its line through Emerald Hill and opened the St Kilda branch on 13 May 1857. Here there were

two fully fledged level crossings—one at Sandridge Road (now City Road) and another at York Street. By September 1887, the congestion on Sandridge Road from the level crossing gates being constantly shut to allow the passage of St Kilda trains inevitably led to pressure to grade separate the crossing.

The contemporary report on the meeting to address this issue is as follows:

LEVEL CROSSINGS. ST. KILDA RAILWAY.

Mr Nimmo, M. L. A., introduced the members of the Port Melbourne and South Melbourne councils to the Railway Commissioners yesterday, and asked that action should be taken to abolish the level crossings on the St Kilda railway at Sandridge-road and York-street.

The Commissioners said that the work would cost £20,000 to complete. It must be remembered that several representative bodies were interested in the proposed works, the Tramway Trust being especially concerned. Would not the best plan therefore, be for the bodies interested to meet the commissioners at a day to be decided upon and fix the terms under which the work should be undertaken. If contributions were forthcoming from the Tramways Trust and the councils, provision would be made in next year's estimates for a grant from the Department. The officers of the department would, of course carry out the work. The Mayor of Port Melbourne said that his municipality was not so greatly affected by the work as the adjoining councils and that the proposal for his corporation to contribute would not be received with favour by the councilors.

Mr Speight said that while admitting the force of this contention he felt that it would be better to defer considering such matters until the conference met.⁷

WERE THERE OTHER CROSSINGS ON THE ST KILDA BRANCH AT THIS TIME?

The St Kilda branch ran in an 800-metre cutting through Emerald Hill passing under Dorcas, Park, and Bank Streets.⁸

Two later crossings at Bridgport Street and Albert Road did not exist at this time. These thoroughfares were then mere traces on plans and did not lead to anywhere in particular. Subsequently, however, they became busy thoroughfares and the Albert Road crossing which fed into Kerferd Road leading to Albert Park Beach and pier, became so busy it was also replaced by a road underbridge in 1922 whilst Bridgport Street ended up with interlocked gates and remains the sole level crossing on the Number 96 light rail route today (see below).

POSTSCRIPT: 'BAD BOY' M&HBR

The M&HBR had gained a level of infamy over its obstructionist attitude to building the Moray Street crossing and equally its hostility to the fortunes of the Town Pier at Sandridge. These actions or lack of them alone hardly endeared the company to the local community, but its subsequent action in encroaching on Fitzroy Street at its St Kilda terminus incensed both the local council and residents alike. It must surely 'take the cake' for disregard of municipal powers, if not the rule of law. Clearly they had, or thought they had, friends in high places, to give them sufficient licence for this action as the following quote suggests:

A public meeting of the inhabitants of St. Kilda was held on Saturday afternoon, at the Junction Hotel, for the purpose of taking into consideration the encroachments by the Hobson's

Bay and St. Kilda Railway Company in Fitzroy-street, and the serious detriment to the locality occasioned thereby, and to adopt measures for its immediate removal.

Mr. B. COWDEROY. Chairman of the Municipal Council of St. Kilda, occupied the chair, and opened the business by detailing the nature of the alleged encroachments, and reading some correspondence on the subject between Mr. Ward, Secretary to the Company, and the Council of the Municipality. The latter took alarm at the first attempts of the Company to encroach upon the street, and having taken pains to ascertain the value of their claims to any such latitude, found that it was evident no permission had been given them by the Government, but that Fitzroy-street was undoubtedly a three-chain street, though now encroached upon to the extent of nearly two-thirds. A deputation having been sent to the Government, Mr. Moore, President of the Board of Land and Works, promised, on the 4th of May, that a letter should be written to the Company, insisting upon the removal of the fence erected by them, and which was the subject of complaint. Still nothing came of it, and in consequence, the Town Clerk wrote a letter to the Board, to which an answer was received, signed by Mr. Darbyshire, to the effect that the matter was still under consideration. The delay seemed to be increasing, and the Council found that all they could do was to withhold from the Company the right of laying down certain water pipes which were of some consequence to their works. To the surprise of the Council, they found some days afterwards that the reserve outside the street was being broken up for the purpose of laying down these pipes. Upon this the Council complained to the Government of having taken the permission in question out of their hands, and on the 10th June the chairman again, by letter, called the attention of the Board of Land and Works to the circumstance, and conveyed to it a resolution expressive of the astonishment of the Council at the conduct of the Government. On the 18th, an answer was received from Mr. Darbyshire, intimating that the Government itself regretted the proceedings of the Company, and adding that the matter was still under consideration. With that concise answer they had to be content. Things were still in status quo, and it was now for the inhabitants of St. Kilda to take what steps they thought proper to assist the Council in the preservation of their rights. (Cheers.)

Mr. BLIGH moved the following resolution:

That this meeting regards the encroachments by the Hobson's Bay Railway Company upon Fitzroy-street, and their persistence in its retention, as entirely unjustifiable. That the Municipal Council having well performed its duty by repeated appeals to the Government, the inhabitants of St. Kilda have great cause to complain of the want of proper and decided action in the matter, on the part of the Public Lands Department, and this meeting hereby records its emphatic protest against the perpetuation of the encroachments complained of.

Dr. McNICOL moved the adoption of a memorial on the subject, to his Excellency the Governor, which ran to the following effect:

To his Excellency Sir Henry Barkly, Knight, Governor-in-Chief of the Colony of Victoria.

The memorial of the inhabitant householders and landowners of the Municipal District of St. Kilda, in public meeting assembled, respectfully sheweth that the street known as Fitzroy-street is one of considerable importance to the locality, as presenting along its entire length the principal view of St. Kilda on the approach from Melbourne.

That recognising the importance of giving to this approach



Workers laying cable tram track on Sandridge Road in the 1890s. The cable winding house is on the left with the notorious Sandridge Road railway level crossing gates in the background. TRAMS DOWN UNDER COLLECTION

all the effect possible, and for other reasons, the late Surveyor-General at the instance of the City Corporation, within whose boundary the street was then included, did, in October, 1855, definitely fix three chains as the permanent width of the same, and that on the faith of such arrangement a large sum of money, viz., £9,000 and upwards, was expended on the street by the City Corporation, the interest of which has now to be paid out of the funds of the Municipality. Large sums of money have also been and are still being expended on the property situated in the street.

That the Hobson's Bay Railway Company have without any sufficient authority, as your memorialists respectfully submit, and in defiance of ample notice to the contrary, enclosed and excavated a large space of ground, being a part of the street in question, leaving a width of one chain and eight feet only, instead of three chains as fixed by the authority of the Crown.

That this encroachment is seriously detrimental to the interests of the locality, productive of much inconvenience to the public using the street and utterly destructive of the objects. In a public point of view, contemplated on the adoption of the three chains width as before stated.

That your memorialists cannot but express their surprise and disappointment that notwithstanding repeated appeals made to the President of the Board of Land and Works by the Municipal Council of St. Kilda, the Railway Company are still permitted to retain the land thus wrongfully in their possession, and fix their works within the precincts of the street.

Your memorialists therefore humbly pray that your Excellency will be pleased to cause such measures to be forthwith adopted as shall compel the relinquishment by the Railway Company of the portion of Fitzroy-street thus encroached upon, and that the said street may be forthwith proclaimed and appropriated to public use of the full width guaranteed by the Government. viz., three chains.

Mr. CRITE spoke to the resolution, and recommended that the cutting made by the Company should be at once filled up by the Council. The Company could then bring an action against the Chairman, and he could then put them to the proof of the priority of their claim to the land in question. (Hear, hear.)

Councilor SUTHERLAND spoke to the resolution, denouncing,

in strong terms, the behavior of the company, and recommending no compromise. The adoption of the memorial was then carried unanimously, and it was ordered to be laid at suitable places for signature by the inhabitants.

Mr. SYDES moved: The appointment of a deputation to wait upon his Excellency to urge the prayer of the memorial, after the signatures have been obtained.⁹

CONVERSION TO LIGHT RAIL

The cable tram line that crossed the St Kilda railway at Sandridge Road and was operated by the Melbourne Tramway & Omnibus Company commenced on 30 August 1887. It forms part of today's Yarra Trams Route 96 service. The Bourke Street section of this line operated until October 1940, when it was converted to double-decker bus operation. The buses were replaced by electric

trams of the W7 Class which commenced running to East Brunswick on 6 May 1956.¹⁰

The Route 96 line was extended to St Kilda Beach at Ackland Street on 20 November 1987 with the conversion of the former St Kilda railway line to light rail. This involved conversion of the track to standard gauge, reduction of the overhead power from 1500v DC to 600v DC and construction of light rail platforms adjacent to the rail platforms.¹¹

Initially operated by B2 Class articulated trams, Route 96 was upgraded for the D2 class five-unit low-floor *Combino* trams from 2004. The line has become one of Melbourne's busiest tram routes and has been listed as one of the world's best tram rides.¹² Overcrowding on the route by 2008 led to the State Government leasing C2 Class trams from Mulhouse in France to ease congestion. Following the introduction of additional sub-stations, new E Class three-unit low-floor trams were introduced on the route from 2013.¹³



The Sandridge Road (now City Road) rail overbridge (right) and the former cable tram winding house on the left in 2015. Raising the rail line to build this bridge enabled a dive under York Street, thereby eliminating that level crossing. PETER FISHER



South Melbourne Station originally served as the headquarters of the Melbourne & Hobson's Bay Railway Company. In this 2015 view it has become a day care centre. PETER FISHER

CONCLUSION

The first level crossings in Victoria were at Sandridge Road (now City Road) and York Street on the St Kilda branch of the Melbourne & Hobson's Bay Railway by May 1857 (see p14 above). These crossings subsequently gained notoriety because of the density of both rail and road traffic capped off by the intransigence of the company to eliminate the barrier to passage across its tracks at Moray Street. Extraordinarily, it took a further 18 years to rectify this most unsatisfactory situation with the construction of rail over-bridges. Well done M&HBR and its successor!

END NOTES

1. The goods shed is undoubtedly where a banquet was held on opening day.
2. This photograph is reproduced on p27 of ARH No. 935, September 2015.
3. And even more for their baggage – one Guinea—leading to wide-spread throwing of sleeping gear overboard.
4. Serle, G, *The Golden Age*, Melbourne University Press, 1977, pp240–241.

5. *The Argus*, Saturday 4 May 1861, p5, 'Hobson's Bay Railway Company Amendment Bill'.
6. *The Argus*, Saturday 5 June 1875, p4, 'The Moray-street culvert'.
7. *The Argus*, Thursday 22 September 1887, p10, 'Deputations'. Note, the Melbourne & Hobson's Bay United Railway Company emerged from the amalgamation of two companies in June 1865, but Watson continued to refer to the M&BHRC.
8. 'City of Port Philip Heritage Review': Railway cutting and road bridges. <http://portphilip.vic.gov.au/default/o23904.pdf>
9. *The Argus*, 29 June 1857, 'The St Kilda & Hobson's Bay Railway Company'. The Heritage Review above refers to various residents' meetings as to the best path of the branch through Emerald Hill with a final decision in 1856 to take it through the Hill. This is the path shown on the M&HBR plans.
10. 'Melbourne Tramway & Omnibus Limited', TMSV *Running Journal*, Vol5 No. 3, 16 October 2011.
11. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Melbourne_tram_route_96
12. *The Age*, 8 March 2008, 'Tram 96 travels tracks to glory'.
13. Kelly. Maurice, *Australian Trams Through the Ages*, Parramatta, Topmill, 2015, p218.



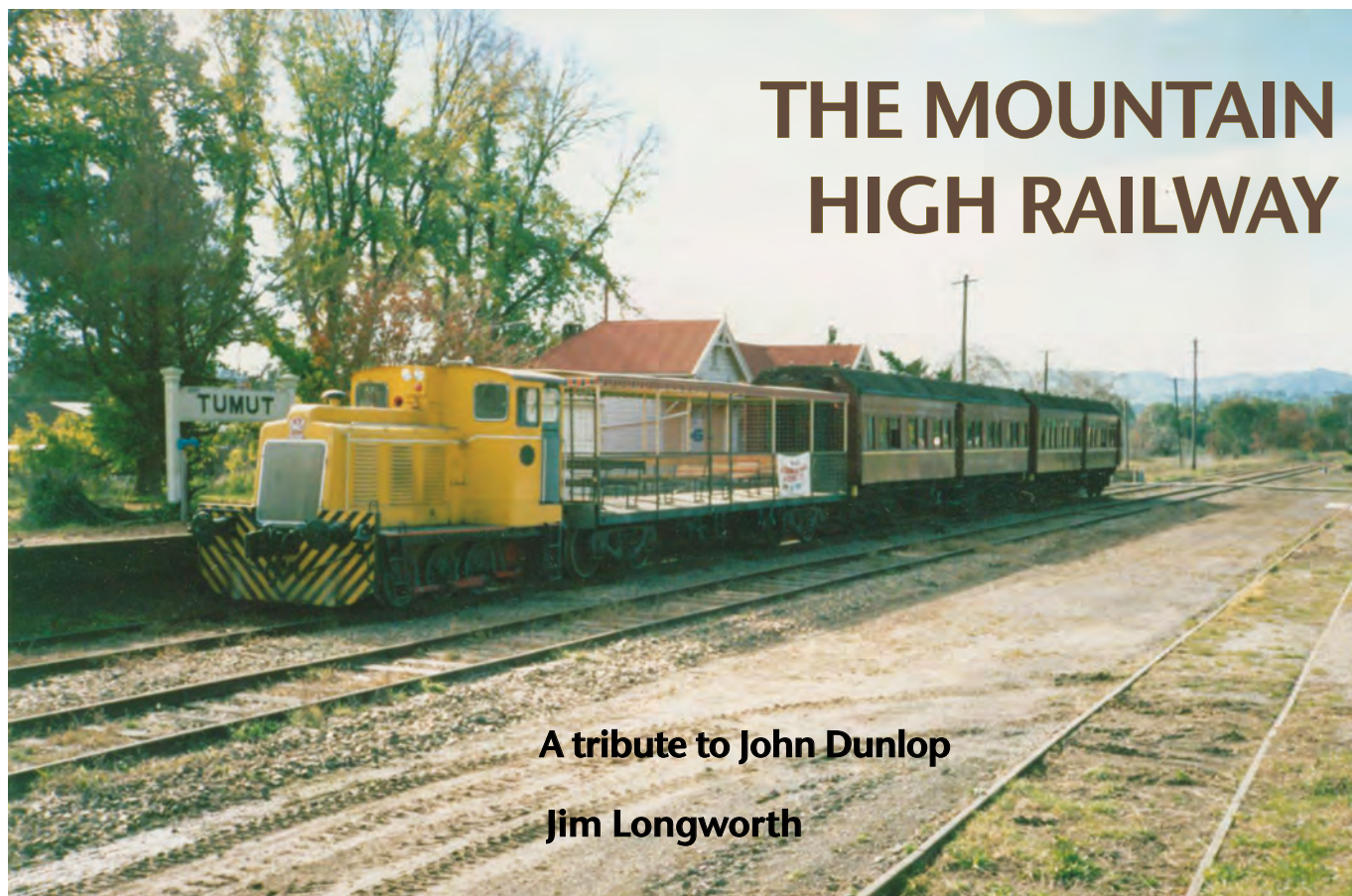
The 800 metre cutting through Emerald Hill on the St Kilda Line was converted to a light rail operation in 1987, together with the Port Melbourne Line. In this 2015 view from the Bank Street over-bridge Yarra Trams E Class low-floor tram No. 6007 is operating a Route 96 service to St Kilda. PETER FISHER

Corrections ARH January 2016

Some minor errors occurred in the captions for images in the January issue as follows:

- Page 4 caption: The words 'bridge for' are missing from the second line;
- Page 16 caption: There is a typo for 'government' in the second line.

THE MOUNTAIN HIGH RAILWAY



A tribute to John Dunlop

Jim Longworth

The Clyde Engineering standard gauge 0-6-0 DH locomotive stands at Tumut Station awaiting departure with a Mountain High Railway train for Batlow, probably in early 1990. The open-sided tourist carriage was built specifically for this operation. JOHN DUNLOP

This article is based on John Dunlop's hand-written autobiographical notes, as transcribed by his sister Heather Ambrose. It is supplemented by my research.

John Dunlop was born in Mudjee, NSW, on 2 April 1930. After studying mechanical engineering, he worked as a school teacher, followed by running a succession of engineering workshops making a range of machinery and components; together with locomotives, carriages, and track for amusement railways across Australia. He also ran the short-lived Mountain High Railway out of Tumut in the Snowy Mountains—the subject of this commemorative article.

After a long illness, John died on 2 May 2014 in Melbourne.

After he was forced to sell his 610mm gauge amusement railway at Waratah Park, Terry Hills,¹ John Dunlop turned his mind to a grander project; the re-vitalisation of the disused former New South Wales Government Railways (NSWGR) standard gauge line running for 37 kilometres between Tumut and Batlow in the Snowy Mountains.

THE VISION TAKES SHAPE

The seed of the new project had been sown in 1939 when John walked a cliff-top track at Katoomba in the Blue Mountains. The distant views and intimate flora enthralled him. The trail was basically level, and John pondered how a railway with open carriages might serve as a mobile viewing platform from which passengers could take in such wonderful scenery. The blossoming of his original seed of an idea had taken 48 years.

By 1987, John Dunlop had established a strong personal friendship with Patrick Dodd, owner of The Toy Box in Hornsby. Patrick was a charming, volatile and eccentric English expatriate with a vivid imagination. John came alive

when with Patrick and his interesting young family. When Patrick displayed an interest in John's railway dreams, John was more than keen to have him involved, along with many of his colleagues.

Step one was to assess all available disused branch lines. This identified the disused railway between Tumut and Batlow as the one with the potential to fulfil John's dream. His proposal document for the Mountain High Railway announced that the train would be a slow moving 'Mobile Viewing Platform'.²

A group of fellow-enthusiasts came together and formed a private company, The Mountain High Railway Pty Ltd. Its directors were: Engineering, John Dunlop (chairman); Kim Edwards (banking); and Peter Linnegar (accounting). As a private company, it was limited to 50 shareholders and the suggested shareholding was 2000 \$1.00 shares per share holder.

The key players visited the head office of the then State Rail Authority (SRA) and weaved their way through the bureaucratic maze with their proposals. Eventually they were granted formal access rights to the track, stations, and ancillary buildings of the Tumut to Batlow line.

THE TUMUT–BATLOW BRANCH LINE

The standard gauge branch line from Cootamundra to Tumut had been opened on 2 December 1903. A further branch was opened off that line 20 years later from Gilmore via Batlow to Kunama to provide transport for products of farms developed after World War I. Returned soldiers had been allocated small, usually inadequate, grants of land to get them back on their feet. In the 1920s the access roads were dirt and steep. Rain rendered them slippery and

impracticable for the solid tyres of contemporary trucks, so rail transport was the only option. Not long after the line went in, along came pneumatic tyres followed by bitumen roads. How often the timing of technological change causes such despair! The railway was doomed to an unprofitable future, bringing closure in 1984.

The Tumut region was scenically attractive, with undulating hills given over to various types of agriculture and farming. These hills gradually blend with the mountains of the Snowy River with its massive hydro-electric network served by the Blowering and Talbingo Dams. It is through the Gilmore Valley running parallel to Blowering dam that the railway line wound its course south from Tumut on its way up to Batlow. For the first 17km there were no significant gradients or sharp curves. Its scenery included beautiful open farmland, timber mills serving the vast planted pine forests, and several kilometres of track running alongside Wereboldera Creek. The whole length of the Gilmore Valley is roughly a half to three quarters of a kilometre wide, bounded on the western side by high grassy hills and heavily forested mountains to the east.

On reaching the Wereboldera Bridge, the easy grades finish at a creek-side picnic ground. This would be the new railway's first terminal station out of Tumut. Shortly after the Wereboldera Bridge (essentially a timber viaduct nearly 100m long), the track commenced its long 1:25 gradient with a tortuous succession of about 40 ever-reversing curves. There were numerous cuttings and fillings as the line cut across protruding spurs and valleys.

Gradually, as the line climbs higher, the grass gives way to increasingly dense forest. At this point the view below becomes ever more wondrous as the whole valley looks like a quilt, the colours of its patches determined by the various crops. Isolated trees along the course of the meandering creek, can be seen capped by great flocks of sulphur-crested cockatoos. Crop dusting planes, tiny in their distance below, spray the fields. It is always a wondrous panorama, rarely twice the same. When the new railway came to carrying passengers, they made a practice of pausing at this point. The passengers usually fell silently into their own private contemplations.

On now, curving and winding through the virgin forest the line proceeded ever upwards until, close to a steeper fall into the valley the trees thinned to a palisade sparse enough to reveal a higher and different panorama into the distant depths of the grassy valley. A short stop for the trains!

Back in among the trees a further short run brought the line to a way-side platform where an orchardist sold a variety of the famous Batlow apples. It was festive, but potent in its reality. The line then emerged into a large open but heavily sloping field, the peak of which the railway gained by means of a great sweeping S-bend. Now the line was suddenly at the top of the long serpentine, where travellers beheld in season, hectare after hectare of apple blossoms. The track still wound to and fro through several kilometres of orchards on both sides, orchardists' houses, tractors moving among the fruit trees, hand-waving observers, and a few snakes, lizards and wombats. The unbroken upwards gradient had given way to a series of undulations many still as steep as 1:25.

Finally, on the approach to Batlow came a stretch running through the middle of the fruit and vegetable processing works, across a paved road in Batlow township and directly into Batlow railway station with its own beautiful stands of trees.

RESTORING THE LINE

Having selected the Tumut-Batlow line for its superb variety of scenery, John then made an open motorised four-wheel trolley to facilitate the start of

their surveying and preparations.

Starting in 1988, work teams of about six shareholders went from Sydney to Batlow at six-weekly intervals, most of them camping in the Batlow station master's house.

By then the line had been unattended for five or six years. In addition to heavy overgrowth, some lineside orchardists had buried stretches of track under their clay roads. Others had felled trees across the line for several hundred metres. Boundary fences had been erected across defunct cattle grids and the timber mills had piled sawdust high over the remaining *in situ* rails. The group had a lot of work to do before they could properly assess the condition of the rails, sleepers, and track bed.

An initial task was to remove the heavy entanglement of logs and foliage around bridge supports in Wereboldera Creek, to avoid future damage to the structure. These were good days: the physical labour, manifest progress, picnic-style lunches, the camaraderie, and the beautiful qualities of their surroundings were long remembered. Little by little, they worked through fenced and unfenced paddocks, repaired cattle grids, cut and removed fallen trees, rebuilt washed-out culverts, slashed massive stands of weeds, recommissioned gates in boundary fences, made many friends, and inevitably a few enemies.

Where there was no road vehicular access, the work teams and their tools were carried on the work trolley. Later they hired an eight-tonne truck with a Hiab hoist from the railways to carry



MHR volunteers straightening kinked track between Tumut and Wereboldera Bridge.
JOHN DUNLOP COLLECTION

hydraulic spiking and de-spiking machines purchased at a Sydney auction, with an assortment of tools.

Sheep were a bother. Instead of keeping clear of the tracks, prompted by the sound of an approaching trolley they would run some distance along the line in front of the trolley, whose braking power was never great. After an entanglement with a sheep, John bought a bugle; the blowing of which kept them at bay.

At one point the nearby farmer had secured the gate by a level crossing. He was initially antagonistic to the project and for many months he threatened to permanently block them from proceeding. That threat eased one day when the team saw he was in strife with the power-take-off equipment on his tractor. They had enough gear aboard to provide a remedy, which he was more than pleased to have. He therewith formally ceased objecting and said: "You blokes can have your cattle grid access!" Great!

The group's negotiations with the munitions complex at St Marys in western Sydney won them their first locomotive, the lone standard gauge version of Clyde Engineering's Model DHI-71 six-wheel diesel-hydraulic (builder's number 58-187 of 1958).³ It weighed 18 tonnes and proved eminently suitable for the intended task.

At Bethungra they found a rake of disused bogie sheep vans, which were purchased for \$150 each, primarily for their running gear. The State Rail Authority (SRA) kindly moved the vans to the Cootamundra railway yard, where the group made four jacking



During the early track restoration period, MHR volunteers remove soil from the rails and flangeways at a level crossing. JOHN DUNLOP

columns and jacked them up about two-metres, thus providing sufficient height to load them onto a semi-trailer for the final road leg to Tumut yard. Once there, mobile cranes were hired to unload the wagons. By removing the crate-type superstructures, they gained both a lot of useful timber and steel stock and a set of very effective flat top-wagons. They were then in a position to carry sleepers, metal ballast, tools, and their happy selves out to increasingly distant worksites.

The group gained SRA permission to take sound sleepers from the adjoining closed railway line between Gundagai and Tumut. The self-propelled de-spiking machine worked wonders picking up dog spikes and other railway items all along the tracks to both Gundagai and Batlow.

Funds for the venture were an ongoing challenge. Patrick arranged house parties to raise funds, both in Sydney and at a number of country towns near Tumut. Particularly well-received were his beautiful trout dinners at an isolated little roadhouse called 'Willow Bend' about seven kilometres out of Tumut. As with most such ventures, the funds raised were never enough, although the track work was making pleasing progress.

Little by little John was spending more and more of his time at Tumut designing passenger carriages to be developed from the sheep trucks, buildings at the depot, equipment such as a ballast plough, and so on.

One day a local man came to see John at the Tumut goods shed. He wanted a job. "What can you do?" "I can do anything except talk"; came the reply. John quickly realised that he could do pretty well everything and, except for an occasional rustic brusqueness, it soon became evident that he was an unusually gifted talker. This was John's introduction to a fascinating and fruitful friendship with Ian Clee. In the end, both Ian and his wife, Ann, worked virtually full-time on the railway. Gradually the scene changed. Kim Edwards and Mark Molloy came and lived with John in the Batlow SM's house. They did much valuable work in track clearing before having to return to Sydney. Two other local couples joined Ian, Ann and John, while Sydney people came down as they could.



A group of children run alongside the Clyde Engineering 0-6-0 DH locomotive hauling two open four-wheel 'S' trucks fitted with seats for passengers. JOHN DUNLOP



Constructing an open viewing carriage using the frame of a former NSW Railways bogie sheep van in Tumut Yard. The former Port Kembla steelworks English Electric diesel-electric locomotive D10 is in the background. JOHN DUNLOP COLLECTION

TOWARDS AN OPERATING RAILWAY

Sooner or later the railway would have to be accredited to run passenger trains, so the group arranged for the Southern Region District Inspector to come and check them out. On the appointed day two inspectors arrived with a view to accrediting members of the group to drive to Wereboldera, immediately before the start of the difficult circuitous 16km of 1:25 gradient.

Their driving accreditations in order, they now had to have the track and facilities accredited. The flat stretch to Wereboldera was approved without too much concern, but the inspectors enjoying their day out, then required the train to make the 1500m climb to Batlow. They had not wanted the inspectors to see that section of track until more progress had been made, but were accorded no option. So, off they went on the train with picks and shovels and prepared for an overnight adventure to Batlow and back.

Next morning the little Clyde locomotive would not pump-up to the required braking pressure before their long steep downhill descent. "Take her anyway," came the casual command. Having practised downhill control for just such a contingency, John had reasonable confidence, but the inspectors would have some frights with the extended braking distances. Using their knowledge of the curves to full advantage, aided by an effective hand-brake, they got down safely. At

one point, after a slow braking on a straight, they pulled up on a timber culvert with the rail head sinking down level with the top of its rotten 305mm square timber support beams. Mortified and embarrassed, they waited for the damning official derogation. It was a long stiff pause: "I see you get the utmost life out of your equipment!" Relieved, and in truth, elated, they then proceeded with confidence.

The outcome was that the group could open to the half-way mark at Wereboldera, but there was still much work to do in order to cross the Wereboldera Bridge and climb up the mountain to Batlow.

Prospective shareholders were taken in two open four-wheeled 'S' trucks in order to display to them the offerings. This exposure to the line's visual delights brought an enthusiastic response from participants.

During 1989, a second locomotive was acquired, this time from the BHP steel-works at Port Kembla. This was their D10, a 298kW B-B diesel-electric built by English Electric (Australia).⁴

On one occasion, John had a small group in the S trucks when a rear spring leaf or two on the locomotive broke. The first indication of this was that its automatic coupling had dropped to within an inch of disengaging from the coupling on the truck. Sweating with concern, John watched their vacillations way beyond the safety zone. Guiltily, he realised that they should have activated the air-brake system and fitted safety chains. It was an unforeseen contingency, for

which they had not prepared.

John's 90-year-old mother was among the passengers on the run up to Batlow. She sat calmly, on the standard milk crate seats, thankfully unaware of the danger if they ran back down the hill. Fortunately, she did not get to accelerate backwards down that slope, and lived to be 104.

Runaways had previously occurred on the track as evidenced by the wreckage of a fruit van several kilometres from the processing plant. Apparently, as it was being loaded on a slight slope in the cannery department, it surreptitiously sank down on its springs thereby releasing the tension on the brake rods. Away it went until, too fast to negotiate a sharp curve, it overturned. The proposed 'cargoes' on the Mountain High Railway were infinitely more precious than fruit, so they took note.

An 18-tonne locomotive on an unbroken 1:25 downgrade is a different proposition from the 1.5 tonne locomotive on 60m of 1:12.5 at Waratah Park. There John had established a rule of thumb that for dry track one-third of the total train weight had to be on the locomotive driving wheels. He proposed to apply this 1:3 ratio on the 1:25 Batlow line, which would be within State Rail Authority (SRA) established parameters. John and the SRA spoke each other's language, leading to many valuable exchanges on a number of aspects of railways.

Not even the most conspicuous dissension led to the slightest rancour in the group's habitual affability. The greatest difference occurred after a long hard day taking the English Electric locomotive up to Batlow hauling two corridor carriages weighing, in total, about 46 tonnes. Once more it was a driving test for two of the crew. Having got to Wereboldera, the inspectors again wanted to go all the way to Batlow. The group protested about the unprepared state of the track with weeds and much moisture on much of the slippery slope, but the inspectors insisted. It took seven hours to climb those 17km. They had to dig, shovel, clear weeds, frequently uncouple the locomotive, hand-sand the rails, and pray for help. Around 400 metres short of Batlow station, the locomotive lost adhesion on a 1:25 section, despite having charged it from a previous rise. It was another uncoupling requirement. John had wanted to back the

two carriages back to the top of that preceding knoll, as far from the locomotive as possible.

The inspectors overrode the crew, claiming that the bottom-end of the inhibiting slope was adequate. One of the inspectors then stood back against a boundary wire fence, the other traveled with the crew in the cab as they again attacked the muddy hill. Well up the hill, the locomotive lost traction, and accelerated backwards towards the precious carriages. As a steel fabricator, John felt safe on the engine, protected by 50mm plate and massive underframes. The other three were comical in their antics and facial expressions of uncontrolled horror.

Down they slid for perhaps 25–30 seconds. With a resounding crack the first carriage flew what seemed a metre into the air as it was suddenly propelled backwards, but miraculously stayed on the track, as all three vehicles began the braking climb up the far rise. They heavily sanded the track manually, taking the locomotive up light a couple of times, and then finally ferried the carriages into Batlow. About 9pm, two chastened SRA driving inspectors again phoned their wives: “Sorry about dinner, we will be home tomorrow”. They authorised John and Ian Clee to bring the locomotive down the hill back to Tumut on the morrow.

By the time they had properly checked what they could of the carriages and filled the sand boxes, it was after 3pm before Ian and John set out that winter’s day. As the sanding mechanism had failed, Ian leaned out over the low rear-platform and dropped sand onto one rail. Within two kilometres they were on the dreaded hill and dew was already forming on the rails. John set the grade control brakes which they had fitted to the carriages for mountain work. Their effect was to turn the carriage weight into more of an asset than a liability in downhill train control—until the moment they might lose adhesion. Darkness soon fell so John glued his unblinking eyes on the little speedometer and his hand on the brake lever. As its tiny needle slowly crept from 3.2km/h to 5.6km/h he applied the gentlest possible braking. The needle repeatedly reached four mph before falling back again to two. Ian, flat on his stomach about 1500mm above the rail head, constantly dribbled his precious sand onto that rail illuminated by the locomotive’s headlight. The tension was palpable and prolonged. As they came out of the forest into the cleared farming valley, aware that, by now so overdue, their friends in town would be very concerned, John blew regular blasts on the horn.

The lower they came down the slope, the more easily their light, now free of cuttings and re-entrant curves, would be seen. Once on the flat they still dared not exceed 6.5km/h for fear of cattle or sheep being on the line, while there were many gates to open, pass through and close. Having left Batlow at 3pm, they were safely home with their wracked nerves at 11pm and, after shivering for a while, they slept.

The next day they checked the locomotive and found it damage free. The timber-bodied carriages, however, no longer had stiff woodwork. Nothing had broken, but the window and door frames could be seen to swing slightly to-and-fro under alternate acceleration and braking. The lead carriage chassis had been bent upwards behind the buffer beam and the leading corner of the swivelling bogie now fouled it, although not dangerously. Their tentative, and somewhat subtle, suggestions that SRA recompense the group were adroitly deflected.

Week by week, month by month they beavered away at the

many strands of their project, experiencing the broad spectrum of human feelings lying between dismay, anger, hope, and euphoria, but the core of their little band remained steady, unselfish, and loyal.

OPERATIONS AT LAST

The moment of opening was approaching. By Christmas 1988, the track to Wereboldera and management procedures for the railway had been accredited. Their uniforms for men and women arrived, and they had devised a large wall-hung booking chart. At last they could market and sell something definite in addition to enjoying the patronage of passers-by. Bench seats were hurriedly made for two ex-sheep wagon open carriages with mesh waist-high sides. The public quickly showed their preference for the fun of riding in these open-sided crudities over the plusher comfort of the ex-mainline cushioned carriages.

By January 1989, the Clyde locomotive was running with its train. Trains departed Tumut for Werebolda at 2.00pm and 5.00pm, for the two hour, 24km trip. The line was featured on the ABC TV’s Countrywide program aired on 20 April 1990.⁵ The usual consist was one or two of the open carriages plus any of the main line R Class carriages. They were soon greeting a sprinkling of coach groups in addition to casual private tourists. It was not a big response, but was encouraging. Ian and Ann, together with Don French and his wife Jean started a vigorous marketing campaign attending meetings in Sydney, Canberra, and Melbourne. As expected, they had a long period of marketing ahead before breaking even.

The scenic features of the little railway in its mountain setting proved a great help in that all the major television channels loved the operation and the group took them out for photographic sequences. They all, in turn gave the operation 20 to 30 minutes free prime time exposure. Each time, within a couple of weeks there would be a surge of patronage for several weeks. Calls on motels bore fruit to the extent of winning coach loads of Japanese and, surprisingly, Parisian students, as such bookings steadily built up. The rub was that most of them booked well in advance, frequently up to 12 months. They were holding their own, but looking forward to the time-delayed bookings.

After several months of Wereboldera as the terminus, the Mountain High Railway (MHR) won accreditation to proceed all the way to Batlow. The first trip to Batlow was memorable event. The MHR had been accepted as a full member of the Australian Railway Preservation Group (ARPG). The day of the first passenger trip to Batlow coincided with their turn as host to members of ARPG. Railway enthusiasts from all over the state came and filled the train.

Arriving at Batlow, the passengers were greeted by the station building decorated with bunting and festively clad school children holding a large hand-made WELCOME banner. The obliging children were rewarded with short rides out of and back into Batlow while the visiting passengers were served lunch.

As new boys in the ARPG, none of the group knew of the ‘photo stop’ ritual of stopping, disembarking, backing the train up, then coming charging into view in a flair of smoke and whistles. No! They just stopped and got off with the passengers, taking their own photographs. Puzzled, one of the visitors came over and asked who the rail buff amongst

them is? Well, John was the only one with a lifelong railway interest; but he had never seen himself as a 'buff'.

The MHR settled into general routines for development, operating, and marketing. All members rotated their turns at driving, guarding, marketing, public relations, and maintenance. By now the whole show was mainly run by six members, Ian and Ann, the Frenches, Harry and John Dunlop.

The MHR provided appropriate, if simple loading facilities, with passengers in wheel-chairs being tied to the mesh sides of the open carriages. The pleasure they expressed during the journey was particularly memorable for the members. Individuals bonded first with the scenery they were showing them from their mobile viewing platforms. Then, needing someone to hear their expressions of joy, they bonded with each other. On a number of occasions, groups of women openly wept at having to depart. It was moving and infinitely satisfying.

Once locomotive D10 was commissioned and accredited, the MHR could operate two trains when they had several simultaneous coach loads. Usually both terminated at Wereboldera picnic area, but occasionally both ran through to Batlow. These were long arduous days for the crew of seven, particularly as having landed up to 100 people at the Batlow RSL for lunch, the crews then had to help out as waiters.

Things were going well and John Dunlop never before or since felt so at peace with the world and its people. He prayed: 'To this moment fleeting past me tarry'.

Initially, staff at Tumut had no contact with a train once it left until it returned. Twice, with trains two hours overdue, John drove out in trepidation looking for the missing train. Relief! There it was parked undamaged at Wereboldera. Passengers and crew had removed the bench seats from the open cars and placed them in a ring around a camp fire and were having a sing song. They simply did not want to leave this corner of heaven for a while.

To improve communication, the MHR had Telecom install a telephone at the Wereboldera stop. On another occasion, ten minutes after departing, a loaded train reversed back to the station. The council had resurfaced the road at a level crossing about 200mm deep over the rails. An agitated phone call and council trucks came from all



Unloading a former NSWGR 'R' type carriage in Tumut Yard. The two heavy-duty cranes are holding the body over the track for a pair of bogies to be run in under the carriage. The body was then lowered down carefully, ensuring that the pins under the carriage aligned with the pivots on the bogie bolsters. Note the bogie open carriage stalled on the right. JOHN DUNLOP

directions and the train got through.

By January 1990, the timetable had Tumut-Batlow-Tumut trains departing at 10.30am on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, and a Tumut-Wereboldera-Tumut train departing at 4.30pm on Saturday, Sunday and Wednesday. Trains ran 'most days' during school holidays and on public holidays.⁶

A SUDDEN CLOSURE

The early months of 1990 saw a build-up in clientele for the MHR; ongoing work improving the track, rail vehicles and stations; and the team thoroughly enjoying themselves.

Then came May. While in The Alfred Hospital in Melbourne close to death from an unattended heart valve failure, John Dunlop received news of a fatal railway collision. At about 7.20pm, on 6 May 1990, a CityRail interurban passenger train ran into the back of a steam-hauled tourist train on Cowan Bank north of Sydney. In response, the government imposed new requirements on all NSW tourist railways, including the MHR. Unable to operate, the railway lost its principal source of income. The whole MHR structure simply evaporated and without daily supervision, the railway was subject to thousands of dollars' worth of theft and vandalism.

SRA called Expressions of Interest for the future use of the Tumut-Batlow railway line during 1992. The advertisement in the *Sydney Morning Herald*

newspaper made no mention of the incumbent Mountain High Railway.

By late 1996, the MHR had reportedly ceased to trade and John had had to petition for bankruptcy. Assets were to be disposed of through Mr P Olsen of the Insolvency & Trustee Service Australia.⁷ The Mountain High Railway Pty Ltd, ACN 003 240, was deregistered.

The CPH rail motors, which had been acquired to operate on the line during periods of low patronage, were transported to Cooma and donated to the Cooma Monaro Railway. In August 2003, the two S trucks were also taken by road to Cooma, where they were restored to be used for track maintenance. Tumut station building was leased to the Railway Creative Crafts Inc. as an arts and crafts gallery.

END NOTES

1. Longworth, J, *I wanna ride 'n the train'!: Amusement Railways of Australia*, Transit Australia Publishing, 2015.
2. Dunlop, J, 1988, *The Mountain High Railway Co. Pty Ltd: Proposal of Operations for the Tumut to Batlow Tourist Railway*, unpublished manuscript, author's collection.
3. *Light Railway News*, No. 66.
4. *Light Railway News*, No. 70; No. 72.
5. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 May 1992; *Light Railway News*, No. 90.
6. Newspaper cutting Mountain High Railway timetable, Author's collection.
7. *Light Railway News*, No. 115.



Wow; look at our new engine! Emu Bay Railway employees and officials stand for the camera beside the new Beyer, Peacock & Company 4-8-2+2-8-4 No. 12 in Burnie yard, probably during its trials in 1930. WINTER'S STUDIO, BURNIE, ARHSNSW RAILWAY RESOURCE CENTRE, 032401

NOTES ON GROWING UP WITH TRAINS

Melanie Dennis

It was good to see a Tasmanian article in *Australian Railway History* No. 936 (October 2015) with some excellent photos. In particular, Ken Winney's images are priceless!

We have put together some extra information which expands and/or corrects the text and captions.

Front Cover: The train is north-bound and is hauling cordwood destined for the Burnie APPM Paper Mill. The location is on the outskirts of Burnie, just north of Pigeon Hill and the train is drifting downhill.

Page 4: Regarding the C Class locomotives, only 27 were built for the Tasmanian Government Railways (TGR); the 28th was built for the EBR (1st No.10) and went to the TGR (via 17 years with the PWD) in 1937.

Page 5: The rail ambulance entered traffic in 1928 and was originally a Ford. The service was withdrawn in 1961 after the Tullah–Rosebery road opened.

Page 7: Alf McCormack is actually Frederick McCormick, the General Manager of the Emu Bay Railway from 1934–1958. He had been TGR's Resident Engineer in Launceston

before taking up the EBR position.

Page 8: The map of Tasmanian railways does not show the Don Junction to Melrose line (just west of Devonport) or that the Derwent Valley line went further southwest from Tyenna to Florentine.

Page 8: ASG Garratt Locomotives: The TGR was not the first operator of ASGs. There were 14 ASG locomotives already running in Queensland (from September 1943) and Western Australia (from November 1943) before G6 entered Tasmanian service on the 18 April 1944. It is a sweeping statement to say "... They were not popular with crews..."—there is evidence to the contrary. Perhaps it would have been better to have said 'not popular with all crews'.

EBR ASG No. 20A was scrapped in November 1964 along with No.18. Only Nos.17 and 16 survived in storage until mid-1966 when they were scrapped. The statement on page 9 that: "They [ASGs] were not popular with the TGR loco crews and were subject to regular breakdowns" is another sweeping statement with no evidence in support.

The EBR Beyer, Peacock Garratt locomotives: (Nos.

12–14) arrived and were assembled and tested in 1930, but until early 1936 they spent most of their time in storage due to the Depression delaying EZ Company's expansion works at Primrose and Rosebery. No. 14 was not the last in service; it was withdrawn in June 1962 with a cracked firebox. No.12, by virtue of a late overhaul was the last in service being withdrawn 8 July 1963.

The PVH locomotive: The Emu Bay Railway ordered the PVH diesel locomotive from North British on 27 January 1950 (Order No.96-A). The locomotive arrived in Burnie on 18 September 1953 and was unloaded the following day. A number of shorter (and successful) trial trips were run before the locomotive ventured as far as Zeehan.

The TGR V Class locomotives were only six-coupled with a 204hp engine, whereas the PVH was an eight coupled locomotive with a 530hp Paxman engine. There is no way a V Class could out-pull the PVH but they could run slightly faster (if one dared!).

For all its problems, the PVH locomotive showed from early on that its normal running costs were far below those of steam locomotives. Although EBR never ordered another locomotive directly from North British, the basis for the three 10 Class diesel-hydraulics was a North British design built for India.

Page 10: Perry only built the first six Q class (1922-3): Walkers did the next three in 1929 whilst Clyde Engineering produced the final ten in

batches between 1935–45 (although TGR finished off Q18–19 in their own workshops). Despite arriving from the UK at Hobart, the H class were prohibited south of Parattah until the enlargement of Rhyndaston tunnel was completed in 1965.

TGR railcars: Initially, it was the oil-fired SP steam cars that were laid up as the cost of oil fuel rose and availability fell during the war years. The TGR did look seriously at converting the SP steam railcars to diesel power, going so far as to order some parts, but ultimately decided that the work required would not be cost-effective.

Before the Waddington /Comeng DP railcars appeared, TGR were operating around a dozen earlier railmotors of various designs and makes. It is not made clear that Commonwealth Engineering grew out of Waddingtons.

The DP articulated railcars only ran the *Tasman Limited* service during 1954–1955 before the new loco-hauled train was constructed, but they subsequently operated the connecting Launceston–Western Junction train for many years. The articulated cars ACS1 and ACS2 entered service in December 1955, ACS3 on 4 October 1956 and ACS4 on 12 December 1958.

TGR diesel locomotives: The Drewry Car Company licensed the design for the 'V' Class DM shunting locos to the Vulcan Foundry who built the locomotives – the first four were ordered from Vulcan in 1946 (Order No. 6147). For much of its life, Drewry was a Design and Sales organisation who then sub-contracted or licensed

construction work to builders such as Baguley, Vulcan Foundry and Robert Stephenson & Hawthorn.

Given this business model, I feel that it is unlikely that Drewry supplied any parts for them—if they did, it would have been as a purchaser, not a manufacturer. Organisations like Baguley and Vulcan had their own procurement departments who could purchase everything required so after the design work was completed, Drewry's direct involvement was essentially redundant. Vulcan was also building the design in multiple gauges as stock items in anticipation of future orders. Although TGR built four V Class (V9–12) in their Launceston workshops from the late 1950's, V12 did not enter service until 1968 after a very protracted construction. So, as at 1964, despite the road number being allocated, there were physically only 12 V Class engines.

In 1961, the EBR hired, at minimal rental, two V class from TGR: one (usually V2) to operate the Burnie yard and the other (usually V9 or V11 as they had roller bearing axleboxes) to operate the Rosebery–Zeehan section. This was not the first instance of EBR hiring TGR locos.

The X Class Bo-Bo diesel-electrics were ordered in three batches of 10, 10 and 12 locomotives. The first order for ten (O/No.6234) was placed in 1947. The deliveries were largely dependent on the availability of suitable shipping: arrivals were: 1950, six locos; 1951, 11 locos; 1952, 15 locos.

Page 11: The 'Heritage' museum in Zeehan is the School of Mines Museum. The Mt. Lyell train in the top photo is not a mineral train; rather the load is coke for the Queenstown smelters followed by empty concentrates wagons. The Pioneer Tours were the reason for the *West Coaster* train, not an off-shoot. The first run was on 17 October 1960.

Page 12: The last steam-hauled *West Coaster* was on 2 November 1963. Walkers-built diesel-hydraulic locomotive then took over until the service was discontinued from 4 January 1964. The Murchison Highway opened on 13 December 1963. The statement 'The [Mt Lyell] line lay dormant for many years' is not quite true. The track was removed, so only the track bed remained.



Tasmanian Government Railways CC Class 2-6-0 locomotive C28 stands at Regatta Point Station with a mixed train ready to depart for Zeehan on 21 January 1949. R B McMILLAN PHOTO, MURRAY COLLECTION, ARHSNSW RAILWAY RESOURCE CENTRE, 011153

Book Review

MORE THAN JUST A PLACE FOR WORK: A History of Dunedin's Hillside Railway Workshops by Ian Dougherty

240 pages, card cover, 209 x 297mm with 235 photos (80 in colour) and six drawings. Published by the NZ Railway & Locomotive Society, Wellington, 2015. ARHS Bookshop price \$69.00 (plus p&p; members' discount applies).

Like many countries, the world over, New Zealand's railways were, for much of their history, the largest employer in many country towns and cities, and much of the towns or cities social life centred on the railways.

New Zealand had six locomotive and rolling stock workshops over the years of its railway history, albeit this included the two Auckland Workshops of which Newmarket closed in time for Otahuhu to open in 1928. These six workshops covered the period 1875 to 2015. Hillside Workshops, remarkably, saw through the whole of that period.

To cover Hillside's long and remarkable history Ian Dougherty undertook a considerable amount of research as his 683 notes and bibliography attests. His research and therefore the book, covers the social, workforce, technical and manufacturing issues of Hillside's 140-year history.

The social history of organisations such as Hillside, which went through good and bad times, ironically had a stronger social conscience than today's modern organisations, despite their employee-friendly policies and practices.

Whilst work was hard, if employees did the right thing by the 'old' organisation, they were protected from 'bad times'

and the employees' attitude to the organisation reflected this in the low employee turnover and long average length of service. The irony is that in the modern organisation, employees are expendable, often being seen as a financial liability, rather than an asset. Consequently, employee attitudes toward the modern organisation reflect this and

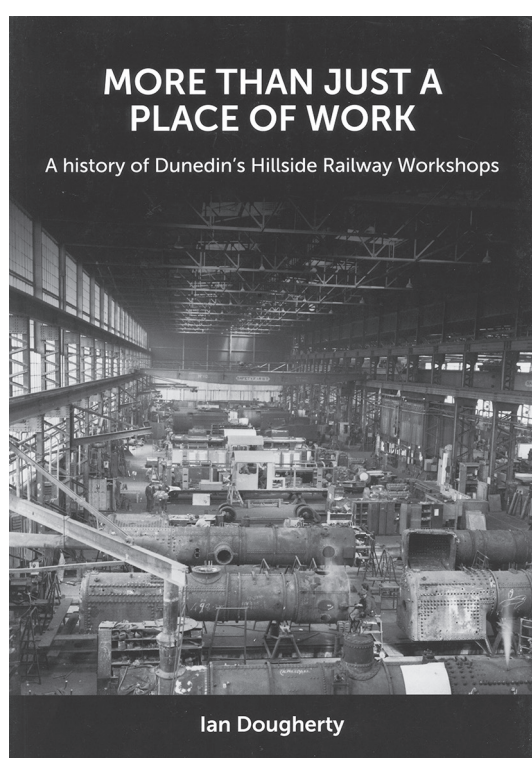
the outcome is the short average length of service and relatively high employee turnover.

This social conscience is shown strongly in Ian's portrayal of Hillside. Whilst covering a very similar subject to Keith Brown's Addington Railway Workshops book, Ian's approach is very different, despite the similar focus on the employees.

The 240 pages, in an A4 format, features Hillside's history, portrayed by subject matter in the context of an historical period, supported by over 150 black and white photos and 80 colour photos. Whilst the content is extensive, I am sure that Ian's research material could develop into a more detailed history of what was New Zealand's largest employer for much of its history.

At \$69.00, the cost of this book is on a par with others of a similar format and subject. I commend the book to railway enthusiasts and students of social history.

Harry Anneveld



In this month's **Railway Digest**

Modernising Melbourne's Iconic Tramcars

In 2011 a program began for the upgrading of some of Melbourne's famous W Series trams, as a result of commitments made by the Victorian Government to keep a number of these traditional cars in operation, by replacing items that required intensive maintenance, or for which spare parts were difficult to obtain, with modern equivalents. Peter Clark tells us how this was achieved.

Melbourne tackles level crossing removals

With level crossing removal becoming a significant political issue in the 2000s as both road and rail traffic

increased across Melbourne it was not surprising that the defeat of the Napthine Coalition government in November 2014 by Daniel Andrews and Labor did nothing to diminish the level crossing issue. In fact the new government increased the political focus on level crossing elimination. John Hoyle reports on the achievements and future plans of the aptly-named Level Crossing Removal Authority.

Port Kembla Steelworks

Dominik Giemza takes a look at the rail operations of the Bluescope steelworks in Port Kembla, NSW.



Remembering Sydney's 'Red Rattlers'

ARH 934, 939, Aug, Nov 2015

John Leeds letter in the November ARH brought back fond memories of my Sydney schooldays between 1944 and 1948 at Belmore Technical High School and then as a NSWGR machinery apprentice at Eveleigh and Enfield from 1948 to 1955.

My railway enthusiast friends and I regularly caught the 8.10am electric train ex-Bankstown each morning to Belmore and the 3.35pm from Belmore back home each afternoon—always running on time too! We invariably boarded a 1940s Tulloch-built car in the front half of an eight car train,

mainly because they had a much higher lift-window than the other cars of that era. This gave us a much better view of the rail scene, particularly as we passed the Punchbowl Car Maintenance Sheds.

We estimated the speed of the train to be over 50mph on the down grade to Bankstown. Occasionally a train with bad brakes—or a bad driver—would overshoot the end of Bankstown platform, necessitating setting-back to the correct position after the appropriate bell codes from the guard and driver, of course.

Another vivid memory is the night scene in the braking area on the approach to Bankstown viewed from the parallel South Terrace. The cast iron brake-shoes then in use would give an impressive pyrotechnic display. In years to come, this scene would be no more following the introduction of 'Ferodo' composite brake shoes.

I had many interesting conversations at that time with my cousin, Ray Sullivan, who transferred from Enfield to Punchbowl to gain his position as a driver.

John Sullivan, Boambee East NSW

Growing up with trains

ARH 936, October 2015

Your article 'Growing up with trains' had a lot of interest for us locals here at Burnie and it has been very much appreciated.

I note, however, that the cover photo of EBR locomotive No. 14 is wrongly described. It is actually travelling towards Burnie, the train's location being just south of the Burnie suburb

of Havenview. The train is drifting down a 1 in 33 grade, so there is just a wisp of steam emerging from the safety valves. If the train had been travelling south towards Rosebery, the wagons would have been obscured by the heavy smoke from the locomotive working hard up the grade.

G M Shakespeare, Burnie TAS

Editor: The caption was based on the information given for this image in the ARHSnsw Railway Resource Centre database. This will be updated in response to readers' feedback. See also the 'Explorer Page' item on pages 27–28.

SMR No. 18 on the 'Cockatoo Run', Part 2

ARH 938, December 2015

I extend my thanks to Ron Webb for his interesting and highly entertaining account of SMR No. 18 and the 'Cockatoo Run'. What next, I wonder? Ron's memories of driving 3801 could make even more interesting reading.

As an occasional passenger on 3801 Limited's trips, I had the opportunity to thank Ron once or twice at the end of a 'grand day out'. The most memorable occasion involved a trip up the Blue Mountains with 3801. On our arrival back at Sydney Terminal, I offered my customary thanks to the engine crew, and found Ron very much the centre of attention, receiving the full rock-star treatment from a cluster of admiring lady passengers. His smile

was even wider than his famous white moustache!

Matthew Wilson, by email

In the upper caption on page 17 of Ron Webb's Part 2 article, the water gin used on the 'Cockatoo Run' is described as a former petrol tanker. Its appearance is that of a more specialised vehicle and, according to the late Ian Thornton, it was originally a liquid ammonia tanker. It would be interesting to know when and where it was last used. Ammonia was once widely used as an industrial refrigerant gas in addition to its application in the manufacture of fertilisers and explosives.

Robert Driver, Killara NSW

I found Ron Webb's Part II article on his experience during the latter 'Cockatoo Run' years particularly interesting. Ron mentions a photo that I took when we were 'stuck up' before Dombarton (pp15–16). I am enclosing a file of this photo for possible use in *Australian Railway History*.

Stephen Preston, by email

Editor: Stephen's photo is reproduced on the next page. Ron's text refers to the 'clinker nightmare' when SMR 18 was forced to drop most of the fire and then rebuild the fire. Stephen's photo of the event is rather more dramatic than the one on page 15 of the article!



The fire of SMR No. 18 has been dropped on the track following the collapse of its fire grates near Dombarton on 15 September 1998. 'Cockatoo Run' passengers stand at the door to get a better view of the action. STEPHEN PRESTON PHOTO

Northampton Railway Station

ARH 938, December 2015

I write to correct some elements of the letter from Noel Inglis in the December issue of *ARH* regarding Northampton Railway Station.

The Station Master to whom Noel refers was Mr Albert E Tower (not Towers), who was at Northampton

from June 1927 to February 1932 (not 1925 to 1931). He took over from Mr H S Ashdown, who was Station Master from 1924 to 1927. The original station of 1879 was Gwalla (nor Gwala), while the first church was for all denominations.

Mary Taylor, Northampton Friends of the Railway Inc.

Editor: Some of the issues raised by this letter may have arisen from the difficulty of reading Mr Inglis' letter. As noted, he passed away shortly after.

What's New at the ARHSNSW RAILWAY BOOKSHOP

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Clyde Engineering Model DH-17 standard gauge 0-6-0 DH locomotive (B/No . 58-187 of 1958) on arrival at Tumut yard from Australian Defence Industries at St Marys, with the heavy-lift crane ready to lift it onto the tracks. It provided the motive power during the early years of the Mountain High Railway. JOHN DUNLOP COLLECTION

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